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ABSTRACT

This manual was developed by the staff of the Read Aloud Programs for the Elderly of the Seattle Public Library. It is based on a year's experience of conducting read-aloud programs in nursing homes and is meant to be a guide for setting up similar programs in other library systems. The first half of the manual, addressed to program managers, includes guidelines for planning, promoting, and setting up the program; the basics of recruiting, supervising, and evaluating volunteer readers; details of the training process; and tips for reading material collection development. The second half of the manual is addressed to the volunteers. This section is designed to prepare volunteers for their task, familiarize them with their audience, and acquaint them with some basic principles of communicating with the elderly residents of nursing homes. It provides specific suggestions for conducting programs and choosing appropriate materials. An appendix includes copies of training materials, evaluation forms, a survey of volunteers, guidelines, and other information. (KC)

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Read Aloud Programs For The Elderly Project

ED304558

INSTRUCTIONAL MANUAL

Written by

Gloria Leonard

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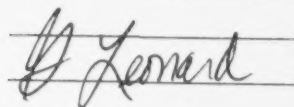
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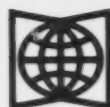
February, 1987
Seattle Public Library
Mobile Services Department
Gloria Leonard, Managing Librarian

CE 052086

Edited By Roberta Wilkes
Photographs by Tom Watson
Our thanks to the residents of Branch Villa Convalescent Center and Volunteer Mary Farkas for allowing us
to photograph them.

February, 1987
Seattle Public Library
Seattle, Washington

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Seattle Public Library

Memorandum

To: Read Aloud Project Participants

From: Gloria Leonard

re: Acknowledgments

The Seattle Public Library's Read Aloud Project grew out of a need to improve access to library services and materials by older adults in local nursing homes. Additionally we wanted to provide an activity that would enrich the quality of life for this special population group. Our innovative outreach project would not have been possible without the combined assistance of the following key individuals:

ADVISORY COMMITTEE

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Dr. Naomi R. Gottlieb
Kay Shaw

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Sharon Bosma and Gretchen Covey, Branch
Villa Convalescent Center
Dorothy Edison, Greenery Rehabilitation
Center
Erma Marvin, Greenwood Park Center
Leon Leber, Lockview Nursing Home
Betty Fairley and Diane Kleinfelter,
Parkside Health Care

Louise Frazier and Marci Napoli,
Pederson Nursing Home
Donna Hilley and Teri Thomasen,
Terrace View Convalescent Center
Helen Dowden and Nancy Purvis,
Wedgwood Convalescent Center

Thank you for helping to make this originally experimental project
an integral part of the Mobile Services/Outreach/Bookmobile Department.



Seattle Public Library

Memorandum

February 25, 1987

TO: Gloria Leonard, Managing Librarian
Mobile Services Department and
Read Aloud Project Manager

Judy Evans, Project Coordinator
Read Aloud Project

Nancy Hoebelheinrich, Volunteer Coordinator
Read Aloud Project

Kathy Bainbridge, Volunteer Program Manager

FROM: Jerry Agen *Jerry Agen sk*
Acting City Librarian

RE: L.S.C.A. Read Aloud for the Elderly Project

Recently, I had an opportunity to observe one of the Read Aloud Programs at the Parkside Health Care site. I was very impressed with not only the concept of reading aloud, but with the caliber of volunteers that have been recruited for participation in such a worthwhile endeavor. You are to be commended for developing a project that allows the Library to further its mission of "...providing all members of the community with free and equal opportunity of access to the diversity of publicly available ideas and information."

Also, I am pleased to note that the 1987 Operations Plan for the Mobile Services Department includes librarian staff time which will be dedicated to the continuation and expansion of L.S.C.A. Read Aloud Project activities.

Thank you for a job well done!

JLA:kck

READ ALOUD FACT SHEET

Project Title: Read Aloud Programs for the Elderly

Purpose: To provide regular Read Aloud programs in nine Seattle nursing homes to provide mental stimulation and enrichment for the institutionalized elderly and to improve access to library materials and services.

Duration: February 1, 1986 - January 31, 1987

Funding Source: Library Services and Construction Act,
Title I

Total Budget: \$46,998

Project Director: Gloria Leonard, Managing Librarian,
Mobile Services Department

Project Coordinator: Judy Evans, full-time Librarian

Volunteer Coordinator: Nancy Hoebelheinrich, half-time
Library Associate

Total Active Volunteers: 32

Total Program Hours: 372

Total Participating Nursing Homes: 9

Total Audience: 3,396 residents

INTRODUCTION TO READ ALOUD PROGRAMS INSTRUCCIONAL MANUAL

This manual was developed by the staff of the Read Aloud Programs for the Elderly of the Seattle Public Library. It offers the best of our experience from a year of read aloud programs in nursing homes. It is meant to be a guide for setting up similar programs in other library systems. Readers might take parts of our model and adapt them to their own circumstances.

The first half of the manual is addressed to Program managers and includes guidelines for planning, promoting, and setting up the programs; the "nuts and bolts" of recruiting, supervising and evaluating volunteer readers; and details of the training process.

The second half is addressed to the volunteers themselves. This section is designed to prepare them for their task, to familiarize them with their audience, and to acquaint them with some basic principles of communicating with the elderly residents of nursing homes. It provides specific suggestions for conducting programs and choosing appropriate materials.

The appendix includes copies of training materials, evaluation forms, the survey of volunteers, guidelines, and other information.

The project has also published an annotated bibliography of recommended material for reading aloud to the elderly population. The bibliography and a third document, the Project Summary, are available by contacting Gloria Leonard, Managing Librarian, Mobile Services Department, Seattle Public Library, 425 Harvard Avenue East, Seattle, WA 98102.

PROGRAM MANAGER'S MANUAL

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I. ESTABLISHING YOUR READ ALOUD PROGRAM

1. *Contacting the Nursing Homes*

The first step in setting up a read aloud program is to contact the owner/director of the nursing home. While most directors of nursing homes give their activity directors a great deal of leeway in choosing activities for the residents, it is a good idea to solicit the approval of the directors before contacting the activity directors. This establishes your contact with the head of the bureaucracy in a nursing home.

We suggest a letter explaining the program and what you would need of the nursing home in the way of support (for example, a place for the program, soliciting and aiding residents to come to the programs, adding to the activity calendar, etc.), followed by a phone call confirming support.

Write to the home's activity director, mentioning the support of the director and outlining the rationale and expectations of the programs. Follow up with a phone call to the activity director, confirming the interest of the nursing home and the willingness of the activity director to help with the programs. During the phone call, arrange an appointment for an on-site visit of the facility.

During the on-site visit, a number of issues should be addressed, including identifying the participants and making the physical arrangements for the programs.

2. *Identifying the Participating Residents*

The activity director is in the best position to choose and invite residents to the programs. Share the guidelines for choosing residents to participate in your read aloud

program with the activity director. That person will have a better idea of the capabilities and interests of the residents than would an incoming Read Aloud reader, at least initially.

Ideally, the participants should be lifelong readers who no longer read as much as they used to. They can also be people who enjoy oral interpretation of the written word and interaction with a group. You might suggest including a few residents who enjoy group interaction but are physically unable to comment. Emphasize to the activity director that participants should be reasonably alert and generally non-disruptive in a group setting. Developing group rapport can be a delicate thing.

You can probably expect a pool of 15 potential Read Aloud participants with about 8 to 10 attending each week. This will vary from about 4 to 14, depending on a number of factors, including the size of the nursing home, the general wellness or illness of the pool of residents, the size of the room the program is held in, and the ability of the nursing home staff to bring the residents to the program on a particular day.

Potential read aloud participants. Ask the activity director to introduce you to the residents who have agreed to attend the read aloud programs, and try to meet with them before the first session. Thank them for agreeing to come to the programs, and remind them of the time and day. Now would be an ideal time to get an idea of their interests and hobbies and of the types of materials they might be interested in. Don't be concerned if residents are unable to respond to your questions. Often they have not read for a while and will not be able to remember old favorites immediately. Once the programs are under way, they will be more likely to remember and to make requests.

3. *A Place and Time for Programs*

Locate an appropriate room. The ideal read aloud room is one that is quiet and has good acoustics, a door to close it off from the rest of the nursing home, and strong natural light.

Unfortunately, you may need to settle for less. At the very least, you must have a room that can accommodate those residents with wheelchairs, walkers and canes, with enough room for them to get in and out of the room without danger to themselves or disruption to the group.

Once you have a room, decide how you want to arrange the group. You might have the residents seated in a circle without a table to make a closer, more intimate group but still accommodate a large number. Or you might arrange the group around a table. This would cut down on the number of participants but would make it easier to pass around pictures or books.

Check the room for any potential noise problems. Noisy ventilators, copy machines, and phones can all be disruptive. There will probably be at least a few disruptions since residents will often need to leave the room before the end of the program for a variety of reasons. Keep an open mind but be ready to approach the activity director with your needs and concerns.

Arrange a time and day for the program. Your visit to the nursing home is a good time to set the time of day for the programs. The best times, in our experience, are 10:00 or 10:30 a.m. and 2:00 or 2:30 p.m., when most residents will have finished their meals and medications. It is vital that the activity director or an aide be available to help you; volunteers should not be responsible for moving the residents to and from their rooms or for their physical needs.

The Nursing Home Assignment Checklist (Appendix 1) lists some issues that program managers and volunteers should consider at this stage of planning.

4. *Tips on Maintaining the Programs*

A key element in the success of the Read Aloud Project was the continuing communications among activity directors, Project staff, and volunteers.

In most institutions, the activity director is the staff person most involved with increasing the social interaction of the residents. In our project, the activity directors chose the residents for the groups, assisted them in getting to the programs, and remained to assist the readers, if necessary. They also had the best knowledge of resident responses to the programs.

The activity directors you work with will most likely be responsive and enthusiastic about the programs. The combination of group interaction and the stimulation of well-presented readings - the keystones of read aloud programs - are often beyond the scope of what most activity directors can provide, and they will appreciate that.

It is vital to keep in touch with the activity directors. This can be as simple as a monthly phone call. It is also a good idea to set aside a few minutes to chat with them after you have monitored a program.

Don't depend on the readers to maintain all of the contact. Frequently there are changes in nursing home activity directors. When this occurs, be sure to meet with the new staff member. Discuss the purposes of the programs and anything that will smooth the transition.

5. *Evaluation*

It is important to have an evaluation system for your programs and training of volunteers.

The success of your programs can be measured in several ways: by resident-participant and reader feedback, by activity director's observations and comments, and by Program staff monitoring.

Built into the read aloud format for presenting programs is a way to solicit participant evaluations, and this can be combined with the reader's evaluation. Verbal feedback from activity directors is extremely useful. Appendix 2 and Appendix 3 are samples of evaluation forms used.

You will need to plan staff time for monitoring programs on a regular basis. This will enable you to be aware of any problems that might need individual or group retraining. It will also enable the staff to provide knowledgeable evaluations.

Finally, you may want your volunteer readers to provide you with statistical information about the number of programs conducted and the number of resident-participants in attendance so that a thorough progress report may be given to your administration.

6. *Promotion*

There is a strong need to promote read aloud programs within and outside of the library community. Fortunately for our project, the Seattle Public Library's Community Relations Office provided us with services such as preparing and disseminating press releases and other promotional materials, as well as printing project documents.

Whether you have access to such services or not, we offer the following suggestions for promoting your programs:

- a. Place volunteer recruitment and publicity materials at all libraries, stores and other businesses, and events sponsored by the library.
- b. Develop radio and television press releases emphasizing the value of the project to volunteers and residents, the amount of training involved, and other essential aspects of the program.
- c. Encourage your volunteers to talk to their friends about the program and invite them to attend an orientation session.
- d. Ask permission from nursing homes to have a member of a club or someone from a volunteer referral group observe a read aloud program. These people will then be able to refer potential volunteers to the program.
- e. Have library staff announce the program at public meetings and schools as well as organizations and churches to which they belong or attend.
- f. Write "human interest" articles about the program and submit them to local newspapers, or suggest the story to editors.
- g. You can count on an enthusiastic response after programs have begun. Your read aloud sessions will be popular, and word will spread. The most effective promotional people for read aloud programs are participating volunteers. The readers know better than anyone else the rewards and benefits of the programs. Give them every opportunity to tell the "real story" of the read aloud experience.

II. FINDING VOLUNTEERS

I. Recruitment

Our initial recruitment efforts were handled by the Seattle Public Library Volunteer Program Manager and were directed toward the usual sources for library volunteers. These included: Friends of the Library, a support organization; a feature story in EVENTS, the monthly newsletter which is available in all Seattle Public Library locations; press releases in neighborhood newspapers for those nursing homes the project would visit as well as city-wide daily and weekly newspapers; and public service announcements on commercial and public television and radio.

Before recruiting, we had predicted that the typical volunteer would be a heavy reader, probably an older woman with previous volunteer experience, who would be interested in the elderly. After a few months, we found that many volunteers were indeed older women with an interest in the elderly, but there were unexpected characteristics as well.

Many volunteers were younger people of both sexes who were interested in the elderly either because they had older family members with whom they had a special relationship or because they had not known any elders well and wanted to meet and understand them.

Because these characteristics became more and more common in our volunteers, we directed special recruiting efforts to places where we might find these people, such as the Poetry Network and local educational institutions: the University of Washington Graduate Schools of Social Work, Library and Information Science, Speech Communication, and Drama; Cornish Institute, an art school; and Seattle University. Additional sources of volunteers would be local high schools and community colleges and the American Association of Retired Persons organization.

We also posted notices at local consumer cooperatives and other community notice boards. When interested persons contacted us, we answered their questions and sent them a prospectus describing the program (see Appendix 4).

2. *Selection*

After volunteers responded to our recruitment efforts, they were channeled through a process of selection, orientation, and training that was designed to screen and prepare them for the read aloud experience. First the volunteers had an interview with Seattle Public Library Volunteer Program Manager, Kathy Bainbridge, who discussed their interests, skills and availability. At that time each volunteer received a job description (see Appendix 5) and an appointment for a one-hour general orientation to the Library was scheduled for a future date.

Applicants then attended a two and one-half hours orientation to the Read Aloud Program. These orientations were scheduled once a month and were designed to give the volunteers specific information about nursing homes, the nursing home audiences, and specific Read Aloud procedures. (See the Training section for an agenda of the orientation).

Following the orientation volunteers had a half-hour interview with the Read Aloud staff. They were asked to choose three read aloud selections appropriate for a Read Aloud program (see the interview in the Training section of this manual). The staff assessed the volunteers' reading skill, style and personality, and offered suggestions for improvement. Staff also discussed volunteers' schedules so as to match them appropriately with a partner.

After the interview, volunteers were assigned to a nursing home with the responsibility of contacting the activity director to arrange a site visit and tour. Each volunteer was asked to contact his or her volunteer partner.

Generally, volunteers began their first programs 1-2 weeks following the Read Aloud orientation session.

The Volunteer Coordinator served as the functional supervisor and the Project Coordinator as overall supervisor for the readers.

We did not want volunteer participation in this worthwhile program to be an impulsive decision, since the success of our project depended upon the willingness of the volunteers to stay with their assigned nursing home as long as possible. Resident responsiveness increased as they became more familiar with the volunteers. We therefore asked volunteers for a three-month commitment and emphasized that long-term attendance would be most beneficial to the residents.

Also, we intended that the project and the volunteers would become self-sufficient after a year. This required that volunteers assume more of the responsibility for getting substitutes for their programs when one was needed, as well as operating fairly independently of Mobile Services.

Since our procedures required prospective volunteers to attend four separate meetings before beginning programs, they had plenty of time to assess their commitment to the project. You may choose to have a shorter screening process. However, this worked best for us.

3. Volunteer Survey

In an effort to assess the factors affecting the volunteers' backgrounds and motivations, we conducted an informal survey. During the ninth month of the project, after all volunteers had presented several programs, we asked them to respond to 16 questions (see Appendix 8).

We had speculated that, by virtue of the structure of the positions, volunteers would have special relationships

with the community, the Library, the nursing homes, and the residents that would affect their motivation as readers.

In a broader sense, the volunteers had obviously recognized the need for this kind of project in the community and wanted to contribute to the quality of elderly people's lives, but they had not been able to do so on their own. When the Library offered a vehicle addressing both the community's needs and their own interest in service, the volunteers responded. On the survey, 93% of the volunteers said that "reading aloud" had initially attracted them to the project; 67% checked "volunteering for the Library"; and 47% checked "working with the frail elderly or handicapped."

The project's institutional requirements for a particular administrative structure, format for programs, training process, evaluation procedures, and so on were apparently a mixed blessing for most volunteers. On the one hand our volunteers appreciated the staff's assistance in setting up the programs at the nursing homes, providing training, substituting, and arranging meetings. Volunteers noted that they sometimes did not understand the need for monitoring of programs, either by filling out an evaluation form or by giving verbal feedback to Project staff by telephone. The training and administrative support provided by Project staff were appreciated by volunteers more at the start of their experience and became less necessary the longer the volunteers read.

The motivation provided by the institutional framework of the Library often became transformed by the reading experience. As their relationships with the residents and staff developed, the volunteers' loyalties seemed to shift from the Library to the individual homes. When asked on the survey what they liked best about their volunteer experience, the volunteers responded as follows: 93% still cited "reading aloud"; 53% said "volunteering for the Library"; and 87% said "working with the frail elderly or handicapped."

Volunteers also reported increased interest in leading group discussions (33% initially versus 47% after experience) and choosing stories for the programs (40% versus 60%).



Read Aloud Volunteers can have a variety of life experiences and be all ages.

III. MANAGING VOLUNTEERS

1. *Commitment*

Volunteers must know the terms of the commitment they are making to the programs - the length of time and their responsibilities. For our pilot project, volunteers made a minimum three-month commitment which could be extended if they desired. We felt that three months was the minimum time needed to get to know the residents and develop the desired audience response.

At the orientation, volunteers received a written job description and an explanation of their responsibilities. Volunteers must clearly understand that they are expected to:

- a. conduct their scheduled programs or find substitutes if they cannot;
- b. follow the format of warm-up, read aloud, and wind-down;
- c. report the attendance, dates and any other information on a monthly basis; and
- d. inform Project staff of changes in the nursing home (activity directors, room changes, etc.);
- e. report to Project staff incidents/emergencies that occurred before, during or after a Read Aloud program;
- f. notify the Library prior to leaving the program.

2. *Motivation*

How do you keep volunteers beyond their original commitment? There are, of course, intrinsic rewards: They may enjoy preparing and presenting the programs. But everyone needs to know they are appreciated. There are a

number of ways that program staff can build in retention as well as a "reward system."

One important factor in our project is that our readers were in an unusually responsible position for volunteers. They chose, planned, and presented their own programs. Each of our volunteers felt highly responsible for the programs he or she presented, and this appeared to be reward enough.

Also, Project staff planned and presented programs alongside and in partnership with the volunteers. The team approach was emphasized and reinforced during training and contact.

Don't forget that volunteers may be effective in other aspects of the programs if their skills do not lie in reading aloud or leading group discussions. A volunteer could be very helpful in coordinating contact with the rest of the volunteers or assisting with selection of appropriate read aloud materials. Especially in a small program, a talented volunteer can greatly extend the depth and scope of the programs.

Volunteers' motivation to participate in a read aloud program can be a strong, supple bond or a fragile connection. Its strength may be unrelated to the efforts of a program manager, for much of it stems from the volunteers themselves. Still, a program manager can affect the volunteers' motivation by emphasizing the nature of the rewards they can expect and anticipating some of their needs.

To attract and retain volunteers, a read aloud program must offer work that is motivating and that enables the volunteers to be productive, feel valuable, and be comfortable. Our Project promoted job satisfaction and enhanced the creative and productive functioning of the volunteers.

Volunteer readers may receive very little direct positive feedback from their audiences. Nursing home residents may not express any appreciation or response to a

program until after it is over. Volunteers should be prepared for this lack of verbal reward. Staff should be prepared to provide other sources of motivation, particularly that which can be gained from interactions with other volunteers in periodic meetings (see also "Tips: Using Rewards").

Working in a partnership can be motivating and can add to a volunteer's commitment to the program. Each volunteer will have the obvious advantages of a ready-made substitute and collaborator with whom to share reading ideas and feedback on the success of reading materials. The volunteer team members often establish a bond with one another that is stronger than their bonds with residents; most readers find that they must keep some emotional distance from the residents in order to continue the programs comfortably.

During the program itself, volunteers can help each other immeasurably by sitting next to "difficult" residents while the other is reading, asking questions of residents to pique conversation, and, in general, shifting the focus back and forth between two voices and two personalities rather than one. This practice helps to enliven the read aloud programs and encourages volunteers to stay with a project.

3. *Networking*

People who present read aloud programs do not often have the opportunity to meet presenters other than their partners. After presenting programs for a while, volunteers want to contact and meet with others who are experiencing the same rewards and frustrations.

We urge program managers to establish monthly meetings for volunteers at the beginning of the project.

These monthly meetings can be very simple in format. As manager, you will want to have available some ideas for materials related to upcoming holidays or special events.

For example, a meeting in November might focus on the holidays. The time for sharing is of primary importance. Encourage volunteers to bring ideas, successes, and problems to share and discuss. Also, this is an ideal time for you to interact with the readers and assure them of your support.

Another good avenue of communication with volunteers is a newsletter. Our project had READER NEWS, a one-page newsletter that included new techniques and tips, special events and workshops, and comments from volunteers (see Appendix 7 for a sample).

4. *Self-sufficiency*

Staff need to decide whether to substitute for absent volunteers or to cancel a program. Since we had a large number of programs to conduct for the pilot project, we chose to have Project staff substitute for volunteers rather than cancel programs. If you decide to do the same, expect to spend approximately three to four hours each week for preparation, practice, travel, and program presentation. Cancelling a program, on the other hand, is a disappointment to the residents and activity staff alike.

One way to avoid a large number of cancellations or substitutions is to avoid scheduling programs during major holidays and summer vacation months of July and August. As an alternative, you might see if the nursing home has access to discretionary funds for special programs such as musicians, dancers, puppetry, films, etc. during these times.

5. *Tips: Using Rewards*

- * Volunteer appreciation parties: Try to hold one or more parties a year for the volunteers. Pull out all the stops. Rent or borrow a silver tea service, and make cookies and coffee. Make it a special time just for them.
- * Volunteer certificates: Upon completion of their commitment, give volunteers a certificate thanking them for all their work. Try to have as high-ranking an official as possible to sign certificates as well as the volunteers' direct supervisor.
- * Offer letters of recommendation if volunteers wish to use their experience to find jobs.
- * Special workshops: If possible, offer the volunteers a chance to expand their knowledge of programs. This might include special workshops on group dynamics, sensitivity to working with the institutionalized elderly, and similar topics.
- * Consider a minor stipend for volunteers to cover gasoline, bus fare, etc. Our project did not do this, but it can help to attract and keep volunteers, especially those on fixed incomes.
- * Offer volunteers the opportunity to become lead trainers, working alongside staff.
- * Give volunteers something such as a uniform or carrying case.

Our project gave each volunteer a cloth tote bag to carry read aloud materials. It was attractively printed with the Library logo and the name of the project, paid for from our budget. You might ask a local business to sponsor the purchase of something like this.

6. Solving Problems

An outreach volunteer experiences many of the same stresses and job performance problems as other outreach staff. As a manager, you will function also as counselor. Be aware of warning signs, such as excessive lateness and/or absences from assigned programs, that may indicate that a volunteer is having problems. Following are some common difficulties and suggested solutions.

1. "Burnout" If the volunteer expresses interest in continuing with the program but in another capacity, explore tasks such as peer training that she or he might do. If not, conduct an exit interview.
2. Close attachment to residents Consider rotating the volunteer to another nursing home for a specified period of time. This will also give the volunteer an opportunity to meet and work with a variety of other volunteers and residents. When the time period is up, evaluate the move. Decide whether to extend the time at the nursing home or reassign the volunteer to another site.
3. Difficulty getting along with a volunteer partner Meet with the volunteer and try to identify the problem. Job rotation might be a solution, or the volunteer may prefer working alone. Before attempting the latter, be sure the volunteer realizes the

heavy responsibility of doing programs solo.

4. The loss or impending loss of a nursing home read aloud participant

Include in the monthly volunteer meeting a discussion of how other volunteers have handled this situation. Recommend readings, such as Judith Viorst's Necessary Losses (1986).

7. *Dismissal Procedure*

All of the volunteers who left the project did so without staff intervention. Some left because of time constraints, some because of unanticipated responsibilities associated with their jobs, and others because of jobs that conflicted with project assignments. However, as our project reached the end of its first year, we felt the need for a procedure to follow in case it became necessary to dismiss a volunteer.

We developed the following process to ensure that all volunteers are treated fairly and that all possible avenues are explored before dismissal.

- a. Staff will discuss the areas of concern with the volunteer.
- b. Staff and the volunteer will together develop new ways of handling the areas of concern.
- c. If any area of performance continues to be unacceptable, the volunteer will be dismissed from the assignment. If the volunteer in question has potential to contribute to the project in ways other than program presentation, staff may reassign that person to a non-reading job such as peer training or evaluating reading materials.

8. *Volunteer Performance Evaluation*

Periodic evaluation of performance will let the volunteer know how well he or she is doing on the job assignment, outline things done well, and point out areas needing improvement. The Read Aloud Project staff are piloting the following form as an evaluation tool.



The Volunteer Evaluation should be a positive experience for both volunteer and staff.

READ ALOUD PROJECT

Volunteer Performance Evaluation Form

Name: -----

Nursing Home Assignment: -----

Rater: -----

Date: -----

Evaluation Period: From ----- To -----

Rating Scale Definitions:

- O = Outstanding: Volunteer's work in this area is excellent and greatly exceeds expected performance levels.
G = Good: Volunteer's work in this area is satisfactory and meets expected performance levels.
N = Needs Improvement: Volunteer's work in this area is less than satisfactory though not totally unacceptable.
U = Unacceptable: Volunteer's work in this area is deficient and does not meet minimum performance levels.

Performance Skills:

1. Interacting with the group as leader. O G N U

Comments:

2. Conversing and communicating ideas. O G N U

Comments:

3. Developing creative and unique program presentations. O G N U

Comments:

4. Interacting with nursing home staff. O G N U

Comments:

5. Leading group discussions. O G N U

Comments:

6. Attend assigned programs. O G N U

Comments:

7. Helping other volunteers. O G N U

Comments:

8. Evaluating materials for reading aloud. O G N U

Comments:

9. Record keeping. O G N U

Comments:

10. Paying attention and listening to others. O G N U

Comments:

A copy of this form is available as Appendix 8.

9. *Exit Interview Survey*

We are also piloting an exit survey to be used when a volunteer leaves the program. This survey asks for feedback in several key areas. Findings from this tool may suggest changes in recruitment, screening, training, or other areas of project management.



The Exit Interview can give program staff valuable insights into how well the programs are progressing.

READ ALOUD PROJECT

Volunteer Experience - Exit Interview Survey

Name (Optional): -----

1. In your opinion, what things could be done to make the volunteer experience more satisfying? In other words, what could we have done differently?

2. What did you like about the project? (Check as many as apply)

----- First Friday meetings	----- Frequency of programs
----- Nursing home assignment	----- Freedom to develop own presentation
----- Residents in your group	----- Freedom to locate materials
----- Working with another volunteer	----- Nursing home staff
----- Time of the program	----- Audition (reading of three selections)
----- Paperwork	----- Initial training session with project staff
----- Other (specify)	

3. What is your reason for leaving the project?

Comments: -----

4. Do you want to be considered for other Seattle Public Library volunteer assignments?

Yes

No

A copy of this form is available as Appendix 9.

IV. TRAINING

To the uninitiated, walking through the doors of the average nursing home can be shocking. At first glance, the scene seems to be one of mad disarray: Elderly people in various stages of coherence and dress wander in aimless confusion or sit dumbly in passive acquiescence; the staff seem unmoved by the cries of their patients; and nothing of interest seems to be happening. "Who are these people?" asks a volunteer, "and why are they here?" Without proper orientation, even the brave and committed volunteer will approach his or her assignment to a nursing home with trepidation.

The Read Aloud staff recommend that volunteers be given some sense of what to expect from a nursing home and the residents in terms of the library services they will provide. In our orientation, we gave volunteers a general perspective on older adults as part of the American population in nursing homes. Additionally, we included an overview of some of the unique characteristics of the elderly and handicapped residents of nursing homes as reading aloud audiences (see Appendix 10). Some information about the residents of nursing homes in Washington state was also included. Following our verbal presentations, volunteers received a manual to use for further background and as a reference tool. We suggest that you present some information about nursing homes in your area where the Read Aloud programs may be presented.

1. Orientation Session

The following agenda briefly summarizes the areas covered in our two and one-half hours training session for volunteers.

Orientation Agenda

- I. Welcome
- II. Context
 - A. Older adults
 - B. Nursing homes
 - C. Residents
- III. Libraries
 - A. Mission
 - B. Need for project
 - C. Project goals
 - D. Format of programs
 - E. Freedom to read statement
- IV. Context of programs
 - A. Audience characteristics
 - B. Choosing programs
 - C. Preparing programs
 - D. Presenting programs
- V. Summary
 - A. Roles of volunteer
 - B. Commitment
- VI. Next steps
 - A. Manual
 - B. Interview
 - C. Assignment
 - D. Programs
 - E. Additional training meetings

See Appendix 11 for a complete outline of the training session.

2. *Interview*

Following the orientation, read aloud volunteers returned for an interview with Project staff. During the half-hour interview, the volunteer was asked whether he or she had read the manual and whether there were any questions about it or any other aspect of the Read Aloud program. This gave the volunteer a chance to discuss any ideas or concerns he or she may have had. We then discussed the volunteers' specific program assignments (time, location, etc.). (See Appendix 12 for Volunteer Time Schedule.)

Later, the volunteer read aloud three pieces (one fiction, one nonfiction, and one poem) he or she had selected as appropriate for a read aloud audience or as his or her own favorites. The Project staff then assessed the volunteer's reading skills based on an assessment form. (See Appendices 13, 14 and 15 for information on interviews and evaluation.)

3. *Assignment*

After the interview, each volunteer was assigned to a nursing home based on his or her time schedule, ease of transportation, and proximity to home or work, if possible. We also took into account the volunteer's personal needs or expectations for the program as gleaned from the dialogue during the orientation and interview. Some volunteers had a strong need for a response from the audience, so we tried to assign them to a more alert resident group. Others were better able to coax responses from an audience or were content to let residents respond as they were able.

4. Partnerships

Volunteers for the Read Aloud Programs for the Elderly worked in teams of two. While this is not vital to presenting programs, there are several advantages to using partners:

- a. Residents of nursing homes often come from isolated situations (extended stays in hospitals or homes and apartments where they have lived alone for a while). They are also often isolated by hearing loss and sometimes pain. Finally, they are frequently under medication which may confuse or disorient them. Observing the two presenters interacting reminds them of the format of group interaction and how a group is conducted.
- b. Having two readers increases the range of skills and talents the readers bring to the programs. Some volunteers will be very good at engaging and stimulating the interest of the residents. Others will excel at bringing life and strength to the written word during the read aloud portion. This balance of skills applies to the choice of materials as well. We also found that volunteers learned from each other, thus extending the training and development of the programs.
- c. Finally, having two readers at one nursing home increased the self-sufficiency of the programs in the nursing home. Towards the end of the project we tried to cut down on the availability of Project staff as substitutes. We asked that volunteers present programs alone when their partners could not attend. If neither volunteer was able to attend a program, staff members stepped in as substitutes. This has worked fairly well. The volunteers report that presenting

programs alone goes reasonably well but they appreciate having a partner to share the work.

In forming partnerships between volunteers, the Project staff tried to match reading and conversing skills as well as personality. Some volunteers were more vivacious than others and were able to lead the group discussions quite effectively. Others were quieter and more comfortable with reading. We found that matches between young and old and often between men and women worked well. Very often a strong "loud" personality could be matched by an equally strong but "quiet" personality. These matches require a certain amount of judgment by the manager and are sometimes decided by the availability of volunteers.

5. Monitoring

Project staff found it important to visit the various nursing homes periodically to see how the programs were going. These visits served to monitor the success of volunteer partnerships, to troubleshoot, and to encourage the activity directors' continued support.

If you have decided to substitute for volunteers who are absent from programs, then you probably will visit each nursing home every few months. More frequent monitoring can be done by telephone, but on-site review of programs is especially useful. Also, it is imperative that managers read aloud at programs from time to time so that they can understand what problems and joys the volunteers may be having and to offer ideas for what works and doesn't work. Reading at nursing homes also reminds the manager of the reasons for the program.

6. *Special Workshops*

Managers may identify areas in which volunteers need special training or further inspiration. For instance, at the beginning of our project the staff did not realize the importance of the group discussion aspect of the reading programs. As both Project staff and volunteers did more programs, it became clear that the residents found the discussion in the warm-up and the evaluation as important as the reading. We therefore placed more emphasis on the verbal part of the orientation.

As manager, you might want to organize a group discussion workshop to offer training in this area for the volunteers. We did this and invited an outside expert to conduct the workshop. Randall Hensley, Coordinator of Bibliographic Instruction at the University of Washington, presented some basic group discussion techniques. Seattle Public Library media specialist Steven Goldberg then videotaped the volunteers as they practiced group discussion questions (see the Volunteer Manual under group discussion techniques for specific information). During the session the videotape was played back as Hensley and the volunteers made a critique of each volunteer's reading. The videotape was also made available to volunteers who were not able to attend this special session.

Another special workshop might include: tips on oral interpretation of certain kinds of readings such as poetry or plays; grief counseling; needs of the institutionalized elderly; mental health needs of Alzheimer's patients; and other topics.

V. COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT

The staff will need to assist volunteers in choosing appropriate read aloud materials. Our policy was to give the volunteers guidelines for choosing materials and let them make the final choice. We asked them to follow the guidelines and report back to the staff on what they had read and the success or failure of a reading choice, using forms for this purpose (see Appendix 3).

The Guidelines for choosing materials were based on: (a) the Seattle Public Library Mission Statement; (b) the materials selection policy of Seattle Public Library; and (c) the past experiences of the Project staff and Read Aloud volunteers. In addition, during training we emphasized the American Library Association's Freedom to Read Statement (1953). Finally, we received some of our guidelines from Richard Ezell, Librarian of the Cohochoheague Library System in Pennsylvania.

1. Guidelines

- a. Choose materials that are SHORT enough to read in 7-10 minutes - three to four pages is ideal. If you are unable to find a story that is short (and we have not found that many), then look for stories that can be read in several 7-10-minute segments.

The length of your choice is very important. The residents you will be reading to will not have the ability to concentrate for very long (how long can you concentrate if you are not feeling well?). In addition, you must realize that those who are hard

of hearing must concentrate extra hard in order to understand you.

If you are concerned about cutting materials that the residents might enjoy, go ahead and read longer stories or even chapters of books. Just be aware of how long you are reading and how well the residents are concentrating on the material.

- b. Choose materials that are EASY TO UNDERSTAND. Look for stories with uncomplicated story lines and dialogue that is clearly understood. If, while reading the story to yourself you must reread sections, reconsider it as a story appropriate for reading aloud.
- c. Look for SELF-CONTAINED STORIES AND CHAPTERS OF BOOKS. A key to a successful read aloud program is flexibility. Avoid choosing materials that require prior explanation. A good example would be reading chapters out of Rascal by Sterling North. This book has chapters that can be read week after week with very little explanation. The actual participants in a group may change from week to week, depending on their health. Be prepared to drop a book if interest lags.
- d. Requests by Participants. One of the goals of our Read Aloud Programs was to give the residents an opportunity to make choices about what they want to read. A request, then, is a success and should be taken very seriously. Even if a request for a certain piece does not fall within the scope of the guidelines, it should be honored.

- e. Choosing Specific Subject Areas. There are some specific subjects that have worked well with residents in nursing homes.
- i. Local histories. These allow the participants to reminisce about their own pasts.
 - ii. Animal stories. Most participants enjoy stories about cats and dogs. A good example is James Herriot's Dog Stories.
 - iii. "Old-fashioned" poetry. Participants enjoy stretching their memories to remember and help recite with the reader.
- f. In choosing material for the warm-up, keep in mind its purpose: to stimulate group interaction and discussion among and with the participants and to encourage them to concentrate on the readings during the read aloud.
- i. Choose materials dealing with common knowledge - newspaper or magazine articles that most people can grasp without special knowledge or jargon.
 - ii. Choose materials on which a particular resident might have some expertise or opinion. For example, a former lumberjack might wish to comment about a story on logging in the Pacific Northwest at the turn of the century.
 - iii. Choose materials that utilize the special talents of the reader. For example, a volunteer with a background in music may can

lead the group in singing a familiar folk song or play the guitar or piano.

- g. Choosing pictures. One of our discoveries during the project was the need for visual stimulation while reading to the participants. Residents of nursing homes are isolated from a great deal of visual stimulation. Pictures can stimulate residents to concentrate and visualize a reading, during either the warm-up or the read aloud.

Whenever possible, use one or more pictures to illustrate what you are reading. Choose pictures that are large, simple, and colorful. The best size is 8-1/2" by 11" or larger, and color is better than black and white. Whenever possible in our annotated bibliography (see below), we have indicated picture books that can accompany a story or book.

2. *Tips*

- a. The Read Aloud Programs for the Elderly Project has an annotated bibliography (with indexes) of 200 recommended read aloud titles. This bibliography is available by contacting Gloria Leonard, Managing Librarian, Mobile Services Department, Seattle Public Library, 425 Harvard Street East, Seattle, WA 98102.
- b. Avoid duplication of effort. See if your library has information on locating books similar to our guidelines for choosing materials (see Appendix 16).

VOLUNTEER'S MANUAL

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I. MEETING YOUR AUDIENCE

After you have been assigned to a nursing home you should arrange to meet with the activity director, tour the facility, and meet some of the residents who plan to attend the programs.

When you meet with the activity director, there are a number of questions you should ask (see Appendix 1 for a sample). But more important, try to get a feel for the nursing home facility through the tour. Establish a rapport with the activity director and residents.

When you are introduced to the residents, follow our Communication Tips, especially the ones about eye contact and speaking clearly. Let both the activity director and the residents know that you feel this will be a good program and that you look forward to their joining you.



The Read Aloud Programs can be a positive experience for both volunteers and residents.

II. PREPARING YOUR PROGRAMS

Before presenting each program, you will need to select the readings, plan the session, and practice.

1. *Choosing Materials*

If you have already done a program, you will have an idea of subjects the residents might enjoy. Or, even better, a resident might have suggested something for a future reading.

If you have only a subject or idea for a program, review the guidelines you have been given by the Project staff and locate the materials at the library (see the "Collection Development" section of the Program Manager's manual). Then formulate (or at least plan) questions to help in leading a group discussion of the readings, and arrange an agenda with your partner (if you have one).

2. *Planning the Session*

We would suggest the following format for your program:

- a. WARM-UP: 10-15 minutes of group interaction that encourages the participants to talk with the volunteers and among themselves.
- b. READ-ALoud: 20-25 minutes of reading aloud, broken into segments of 7-10 minutes in order to allow participants to assimilate what has been read and comment on the readings.

- c. WIND-DOWN: 10-15 minutes to allow the participants and volunteers to discuss and evaluate the readings. Also, this is the time when participants are encouraged to choose what is to be read at future programs.

Each part of the format is designed to provide mental stimulation and enrichment for the residents and to help program staff evaluate the effectiveness of the programs.

Warm-up and wind-down. The warm-up and wind-down are designed to encourage the participants to talk and interact. This helps prepare them mentally to be able to concentrate on the read aloud part of the program and encourages them to become involved in evaluating the readings.

The most commonly used warm-up is reading of current events. This includes newspaper and magazine articles presented with topic questions that you prepare to stimulate discussion. Some volunteers have used their musical talents to lead participants in singing familiar tunes.

Read Aloud. At the core of the program is the read aloud portion when you will present a work of poetry, short stories, or chapters of books for the participants' enjoyment. When planning and presenting this portion of the program, be aware of the participants' attention spans. A nursing home resident will often be unable to concentrate for longer than 7 or 8 minutes without a break. If participants seem restless, or if some fall asleep, cut the reading short.

Wind-down. Allowing time for a wind-down gives you the opportunity to get participant reaction/feedback about the readings. Also, the wind-down gives the participants an opportunity to exercise their freedom of choice.

Throughout the session you will use questions that you have prepared in advance.

3. *Tips for Practice*

Before you begin to practice, consider editing and timing your readings.

Editing. After you have chosen what you wish to read, you may need to edit it because, while the item is a good story, it may be too long for your participants' attention span, or there may be a few awkward passages.

CAVEAT! When editing, please use a very light hand. You have an obligation to transmit the author's words as they were intended.

Editing magazine/newspaper articles. The first few paragraphs are the most essential. Choose paragraphs with active descriptions. Be prepared to paraphrase the last few paragraphs of your readings if attention lapses.

Editing stories. Stories are more difficult to edit than newspaper or magazine articles. If you do need to cut a story, look for asides to the main theme. You may also want to omit descriptions of things or events unrelated to the basic story line.

Timing. It is essential to be able to estimate how much time a single reading will take and how much time your entire program will take. You will need to practice and time yourself. Usually you can count on 5 minutes per page of a regular-size hardback with medium-size print, but you will often be reading from poems, pages with illustrations, and so on, so you really need to time yourself.

Remember to speak slowly but clearly so that residents who are hard of hearing can understand you.

Practicing. After you have chosen your pieces:

- a. Read them once silently.
- b. Read them once out loud - fast.
- c. Edit if you need to.
- d. Reread out loud - slowly.
- e. Read and practice any hard parts.
- f. Read aloud one more time.
- g. Practice your questions.
- h. For general tips in reading aloud, refer to Appendix 17.



Practice reading with your book down from your face so that residents who are hard of hearing can read your lips.

III. ABOUT COMMUNICATION

[Our thanks to the authors of Choosing A Nursing Home: A Guidebook for Families, Marty Richards, et al., University of Washington, Seattle & London, 1985, for their valuable insights, some of which we have used in this section.]

1. *Group Dynamics*

An essential part of the read aloud programs is the concept and practice of group dynamics. Briefly, group dynamics is the interaction among members of a group that encompasses not only individual actions but the action of the group as a whole.

One of the prime things we learned about group dynamics with the read aloud programs was the need to prepare and present preformulated questions. These are needed to encourage participants to interact in the group, not only for the flow of conversation but also to stimulate residents to concentrate on the readings.

Try to ask specific questions that enable the residents to discuss their unique experiences in life. Formulate questions that deal with universal themes, and remember to concentrate on the "how and why" kind of questions rather than the "did."

Here are a few guidelines to remember about discussions:

- a. You are the facilitator of the group. Although you may be the most articulate, please try not to dominate the conversation. Your responsibility is to encourage others to talk and to ease the flow of conversation.
- b. Everyone may have a different way of responding to questions. Try to avoid thinking there is a right or wrong answer. Below we have given you some

guidelines to help formulate "open-ended" questions.

- c. Many residents may have hearing loss or be on medication and have difficulty in understanding. Be as careful in asking questions clearly and slowly as you are in reading aloud.
- d. Sometimes no one will be responsive. Don't be concerned. You have not failed. As with all groups, people may be reacting not to you or your questions but to something else that may have occurred before you came to the program. Keep trying.

2. Questions

Certain types of questions will work better than others. For example:

- a. Questions that deal with the participants' own related experiences. Residents of nursing homes often wish to pass on their own experiences to others and to talk about their past. (See Appendix 18 for a list of audience characteristics and how to respond to them.)
- b. Questions that raise universal issues. The residents of nursing homes have, like most people, a desire to express their opinions about the world around them. Unlike many other audiences, however, they may be less likely to express those opinions. Read aloud programs and questions that encourage the residents to express themselves can bring out these opinions.
- c. "How" and "why" rather than "did" questions. "How did you feel when you first rode a bicycle without help?" may entice participants to respond more than "Do you remember your first bicycle ride

without help?" Avoid questions that can be answered with just "yes" or "no."

Example: You have read a story about a dog and her loyalty to the family she belonged to. Here are some questions you might ask:

- i. What types of dogs have you owned?
- ii. What type of dog did your family own when you were growing up?
- iii. Do you think that dogs are naturally loyal? Or do you believe that owners earn this loyalty?
- iv. Has anyone ever had an experience similar to the one the family had in this story? Would you tell us about it?

Note that you may need to use "did" questions, but try to keep them tied to "how" and "why" questions whenever possible.

Finally, when you ask a question, listen for the answer. This sounds very simple, but you must realize that the audience will need a much longer time to understand the question, formulate their answers, and verbalize those answers. This is especially true for those who may have physical handicaps that inhibit their ability to respond.

Make sure that the residents have a chance to respond. This means there will be silence between the questions. Don't be concerned. Relax. Everyone, including you, will have the opportunity to talk and listen.

3. *Difficulties and How to Handle Them*

a. Communication barriers

Leading a group discussion with a read aloud audience can be challenging. Most read aloud volunteers are

initially surprised at the level of discussion in a nursing home. More often than not, the conversations about any given reading are based more literally on the action or the images in the text rather than on any interpretation or abstraction from it. For instance, if a volunteer were to read an article from "Smithsonian Magazine" about fish farming, the conversation would probably center more around the residents' memories of fishing and fishing boats than about the effect of fish farming on the local economy. Abstract conversations are certainly possible, depending upon the audience. Retirement homes might provide other opportunities, but that also depends upon the residents.

Coming to programs with your questions prepared can be very helpful in initiating group conversations. There may be situations, however, which could impede satisfactory group conversation. Some of these situations and possible ways of handling them are presented in the following section.

b. Special Problems of Communication

Impaired hearing:

- Check to see that a hearing aid, if present, is on and working and that volume is adequate.
- Speak slowly and clearly.
- Speak with lowered pitch and tone, but DON'T shout.
- Sit and stand where your lips can be seen, away from a brightly lit window.

Impaired speech: Understand that inability to speak does not mean inability to understand. Always address residents as if they understood you. When communicating:

- Keep questions and statements simple. Allow yes and no answers.

- Don't shift too quickly to another topic. Allow residents time to comprehend.
- Use gestures and find out whether a speech-impaired resident uses particular signs.
- Be aware that swearing and strange language may be associated with certain illnesses. Don't be upset or try to correct the language.
- Don't talk to others in the room as if the residents were not present.

Confusion:

- Stay in resident's line of vision and maintain eye contact.
- Consistently and gently reinforce reality by saying your name and who/what you are talking about.
- Don't expect long recall!

c. Difficulties in Group Communication

- i. A participant tends to monopolize the conversation or is too talkative and may discourage others from joining in. It is possible that the person may be anxious to share information or simply enjoys talking.

Suggestion. When there is a good break in the conversation, interrupt with a comment that acknowledges what the person has said but clearly moves on. Example: "A good point; what do you think of this idea, Mr. Jones?"

- ii. The response may seem inappropriate or unrelated to the topic.

Suggestion. Acknowledge what the individual has said, but continue the conversation with a clarification of the concept you are discussing.

Example: "Thank you for your contribution. We were talking about [x]. Does anyone else have similar experiences?"

- iii. A person brings up the same issue or personal experience, no matter what the story or discussion.

Suggestion. Acknowledge the importance of what the person has said, but suggest that the discussion was focusing on something else. "That was an interesting story. We were discussing [x]. Do you have any comments about this?"

- iv. A resident seems irritable or annoyed at the reading or discussion. The resident may be dissatisfied by the choice of reading or offended by the reading for personal reasons.

Suggestion. If this appears to be the case, first acknowledge the sensitivity of the issue and then ask the other participants if they wish you to continue. (See below for more discussion.)

- v. The individual makes distracting noises or mutterings. This may include starting side conversations or other disruptive behavior.

As with "iv" above, there may be dissatisfaction with the way the program is going. However, in the nursing home setting, the individual may also have physiological or psychological difficulties that cause these behaviors, such as an inability

to hear, loss of concentration, or medication that causes unconscious physical responses.

Suggestions. Discuss the person's behavior with the activity director and try to determine the cause.

If someone becomes disruptive during a program, the reader's partner can often calm the person with a touch and a request to be quieter. The individual may not be aware of his or her behavior.

If the behavior continues to be distracting for the group, you should request assistance from the activity staff. If the behavior continues from program to program, you should consider requesting that the individual no longer attend the programs.

- vi. There are arguments between participants or personality clashes among the group.

Suggestions. Seat the individuals away from each other. When an argument begins, interrupt by asking for an opinion or idea from one of the arguing people. If they continue to argue, you might need to make arrangements for them to take turns attending the programs.

- vii. An individual doesn't talk.

Suggestions. Find out if the person is able to talk at all. Many residents are alert mentally but unable to respond verbally. The resident may feel shy or uncertain about how to behave or respond.

If someone is unable to speak, you can ask questions which can be answered by nodding or shaking the head.

Ask people's opinions by addressing them individually: "Mrs. Smith, what were your feelings about the first valentine you received?"

- viii. An individual becomes highly emotional and may begin to cry.

Some topics touch off an emotional response or over-response. The individual may have a need to release emotion in a safe situation.

Suggestions. Quietly acknowledge the person's need to express him/herself. Ask if he/she wishes to talk about these feelings, but move on to another subject if the person doesn't.

Call the activity staff if the emotional response continues.

4. *Communication Tips*

Conversing with nursing home residents can be difficult, especially if they are mentally or physically impaired. The following tips may help ease communication:

Physical arrangement:

- Try to sit, stand or kneel at the level of the resident so that he/she can see you. Try to position yourself so that the resident can see your face, especially if he/she is hard of hearing. Avoid, for example, standing in front of a window where your face would be harder to see.

Listening:

- Being a good listener aids communication. Be alert to words and tones as well as nonverbal communication.
- Concentrate on residents' comments instead of on your own thoughts or responses.
- Silences are not a sign of failure. Allow them to happen.
- Acknowledging what a resident says shows that you are listening. This can be done by summarizing or asking questions about what was said.
- One does not necessarily agree with a resident's comments by acknowledging them, but it does show that the reader respects a resident's right to his or her opinions.
- Avoid mixing messages by giving one message verbally and another nonverbally (by tone of voice, speed of speaking, gestures, eye contact, body position, etc.).

Speed

- For the hard of hearing, the speed of reading can be very important. The reader must speak slowly and clearly so that the hearing-impaired can understand what is being said. It is rare that a person reads too slowly.
- Regardless of the reading speed, however, it is important not to run unrelated thoughts together. Avoid this by allowing a pause of about 1-2 seconds at the end of a complete thought such as a paragraph or a stanza of a poem. Longer pauses would be appropriate between chapters and between titles and text.

Volume

- The reader's volume will depend on the size of the room and static noises such as traffic, equipment, etc. It will also depend upon the hearing level of the residents in the room. Those who are exceptionally hard of hearing can be seated next to the reader. Again, a clear voice and a lower pitch will allow a reader to be heard much more readily than a shout since shouting distorts the voice. When reading in a group, ask residents in each part of the room whether they can hear you; this will be your best test.

Avoid

- Reading on the run - This means always looking at your watch and thinking about where else you might go. Don't be in a hurry for read aloud programs.
- Discounting - Residents are often made to feel that they are not as important as other people. You convey this message by discussing them with staff while they are present, by speaking for them because their response time is slow, and by interrupting them before they finish speaking. It is important to give residents your full attention and allow them time to express themselves.
- Condescension - Be careful not to treat residents as if they were children or not present. This message is communicated when you laugh at residents or make an issue out of their inconsistencies. By virtue of their age and experience, residents have much to offer. Asking for their opinions can greatly enhance the residents' sense of well-being.

IV. PRESENTING YOUR FIRST PROGRAM - A CHECKLIST

1. ARRIVE EARLY TO CHECK IN WITH THE NURSING HOME AND THE ACTIVITY DIRECTOR. Check with the activity director for any special celebrations or problems (for example, a resident's birthday or a need to change the room).
2. GREET RESIDENTS AS THEY ARRIVE AND ESTABLISH RAPPORT. Shake hands, maintain eye contact, and call them by name.
3. OPEN THE PROGRAM WITH A WELCOME. Greet the residents as a group, introduce yourself and your partner, thank them for coming, and announce the opening of the program.
4. GIVE YOUR AGENDA. Give a short summary of what you will be reading.
5. WARM-UP. Be prepared to expand or contract the discussion according to the interests of the group.
6. READ ALOUD. Be sure to follow the tips for responding to audience needs, especially looking up, maintaining eye contact, and keeping your book down (see Appendix 18).
7. WIND-DOWN. Remember to ask residents for their opinions of the readings and suggestions for future programs.
8. CLOSING. Thank everyone for coming, tell those in attendance that you will see them next week, and then thank each one again, individually, for coming.

APPENDIX

No.	Title
1.	Nursing Home Assignment/Checklist
2.	Program Evaluation for Read Aloud Programs
3.	Materials Evaluation for Read Aloud Programs
4.	Read Aloud Programs for the Elderly Information for Prospective Volunteers
5.	Volunteer Job Description - Seattle Public Library
6.	Read Aloud Programs for the Elderly Volunteer Survey
7.	<u>Reader News</u> , Vol. 1, No. 2
8.	Volunteer Performance Evaluation Form
9.	Volunteer Experience - Exit Interview Survey
10.	Some Characteristics of Older People
11.	Orientation Outline
12.	Volunteer Time/Preference Schedule
13.	Information on Reader Interview
14.	Explanation of Volunteer Reader Evaluation
15.	Reader Review Committee Evaluation
16.	How To Find A Book
17.	Tips on Reading Aloud
18.	Audience Characteristics and Responding to Audience Needs

NURSING HOME ASSIGNMENT/CHECKLIST

Your Name _____

Assigned Nursing Home _____

Nursing Home Address _____

Directions: _____

Time of Program: _____

Name of Activity Director: _____

Name of Contact Person at Nursing Home: _____

Telephone Number of Nursing Home: _____

QUESTIONS TO ASK ACTIVITY DIRECTOR:

1. Where will the program be held?
2. Should I come earlier to arrange the room? When?
3. Will another program be held immediately after mine?
4. May I use the parking lot?
5. To whom should I report when I arrive at the nursing home?
6. Which nurse and/or nursing station should I contact in case of an emergency with a resident?
7. Is there anything else I need to know?

DATE _____ READER _____ PARTNER _____ NURSING HOME _____

Title/type of Materials used

Warmup _____

Read Aloud _____

WARMUP

Did you have any difficulties with the warmup? what _____

Did the warmup work well? why _____

READ ALOUD

Were the read aloud materials easy to read aloud? _____

How did the audience respond? (e.g., interested, bored) _____

Would you recommend another reader using the materials? _____

Would you recommend materials on the same subject? _____

OTHER COMMENTS: _____

READER _____ PARTNER _____
NURSING HOME _____
DATE _____ TIME _____ DAY _____ ATTENDANCE _____

AUDIENCE REACTION:

Enthusiastic ☐ Responsive ☐ Some Interest ☐ Disinterest ☐

Other: _____

AUDIENCE EVALUATION:

Program (overall)	Enjoyed ☐	Neutral ☐	Did not enjoy ☐
Warmup:	Enjoyed ☐	Neutral ☐	Did not enjoy ☐
Read Aloud:	Enjoyed ☐	Neutral ☐	Did not enjoy ☐
Discussion:	Enjoyed ☐	Neutral ☐	Did not enjoy ☐

Audience comments and requests for future programs: _____



Read Aloud Programs for the Elderly Information for Prospective Volunteers

We welcome your interest in the READ ALOUD PROGRAMS FOR THE ELDERLY! As Project staff, we know that volunteers are essential to the success of the READ ALOUD Project.

We are training community volunteers to visit a selected nursing home with a partner on a regular basis and present an hour long program to small groups of nursing home residents once or twice a week. We are searching for volunteers who have a love of reading, skill in reading aloud as well as leading group discussions and a desire to share with elders who can often no longer read on their own. Interested? We'd like to tell you the purpose of our Project, what we will expect from you and how you can get involved.

GOALS:

The Project goals are to present book oriented programs to nursing home residents as a way of providing mental stimulation and enrichment as well as increased access to library materials. To most effectively achieve those goals, we have established a format for an hour-long program.

PROGRAM FORMAT:

The first part of the program, the warm-up (10-15 minutes) allows the volunteer and residents to interact when the volunteer reads short selections such as current events or feature articles from the newspaper. The residents are then encouraged to engage in discussion about issues related to those readings for the mental stimulation received from renewed access to the outside world.

Following this warm-up, volunteers will read aloud selections of the residents' and volunteer's choice, (15-20 minutes). The volunteer's skill in bringing to life an author's meaning by the art of reading aloud can enliven the resident's imagination and enrich her/his life.

The final (10-15 minutes) part of the program is equally important in that the volunteers take the opportunity to evaluate their program and solicit ideas for the future both from the group and from individual residents.

SELECTIONS:

Selections for the programs will, initially, be made by Project staff and will include short stories, magazine articles, poems, books, essays, etc. Volunteers will be trained to find new program selections. A unique feature of this "pilot" project is the research and documentation on appropriate selections to be read aloud to a nursing home audience. Volunteers play a key role in that important function.

TRAINING:

The first step of the selection and training process for READ ALOUD volunteers involves an interview and an orientation session with the Seattle Public Library Volunteer Program Manager. Following referral to the Project, volunteers attend an orientation designed to provide background information on the Project, the context of the volunteer experience with residents of nursing homes, program selection and techniques for reading aloud and leading group discussions.

Successful READ ALOUD volunteers have skills in both reading and working with small groups. We determine the skill level of interested volunteers in the above areas at a scheduled interview with Project staff following the orientation. During the interview, the volunteer will also read aloud prepared selections of her/his choice.

Notification of the results and an assignment to both a partner and a nursing home will follow this interview.

COMMITMENT:

We understand the importance of well trained and satisfied volunteers to the success of our Project. We are committed to providing that training and support. In return, we ask for a three month commitment from you with an average of 5 hours per week. We suspect that you could very easily extend your commitment when you see the excitement and pleasure that your efforts bring to the special people in nursing homes.

To become involved in the Project, call **Kathy Bainbridge, Volunteer Program Manager** of the Seattle Public Library at **386-4140** to schedule an appointment. Project staff can be reached at **684-4713** to answer your questions. The READ ALOUD Project office is located in the **Mobile Services Department** below the Henry Library at **425 Harvard Avenue East (98102)** on Capitol Hill. We hope to hear from you!

Judy Evans, Project Coordinator
Nancy Hoebelheinrich, Volunteer Coordinator

READ ALOUD PROGRAMS FOR THE ELDERLY is made possible by funds from the Library Services and Construction Act, Title I funds.

VOLUNTEER JOB DESCRIPTION
SEATTLE PUBLIC LIBRARYJOB TITLE: Read Aloud Project
AideDIVISION/DEPARTMENT OR REGION: Community
Library Services/Mobile Services

GENERAL DESCRIPTION:

Assist Read Aloud Grant Project staff with nursing home programs designed to provide mental stimulation and enrichment activity for institutionalized elderly and disabled individuals.

Conduct read aloud programs or assist project staff and volunteers as they conduct read aloud programs.

Establish and maintain cohesive relationship between the project and the nursing home.

DUTIES: Specific duties will vary--depending on the experience and skill of the volunteer and on the specific assignment. Duties can include any of the following:

- curriculum development
- hosting
- reading
- recording program attendance
- recording participant reaction
- program evaluation

QUALIFICATIONS AND JOB SKILLS:

Good communication skills, including good reading aloud ability.
Interest in and ability to develop curricula for read aloud sessions.
Pleasing manner.
Ability to work well with staff and with the institutionalized elderly and disabled individuals.
Dependability, flexibility, patience.

REQUIREMENTS OF THE JOB AND ANY SPECIAL FEATURES:

See Placement Information Form.

TRAINING AND SUPERVISION:

Initial training/orientation required: 6 - 8 hours.

Provided by the project staff except for initial volunteer orientation which is provided by the Volunteer Program Manager.

READ ALOUD PROGRAMS FOR THE ELDERLY VOLUNTEER SURVEY

As part of our research for the project, we need to ask a few questions about your background, why you joined the project, etc. Another Form?! Yes, I know. Sorry. And thanks for filling it out.

Judy Evans
Project Coordinator

BACKGROUND

- (1) Age Please check one
- ☐ Under 25 ☐ 45-54
- ☐ 25-34 ☐ 55-64
- ☐ 35-44 ☐ 65 or over
- (2) Sex ☐ Male ☐ Female
- (3) Education completed
- ☐ Some high school study ☐ Bachelor's degree...what area? _____
- ☐ High School or GED degree ☐ Some graduate study
- ☐ Some college study ☐ Post-undergraduate degree...what? _____
- (4) Children
- Are you a parent ☐ Yes ☐ No
- If you are a parent, do your children still live with you ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Part of the
- (5) Are you now, or have you in the past cared for an elderly relative or friend in your own home ☐ Yes ☐ No
- (6) Do you now, or have you in the past had a relative or friend that had to live in a nursing home ☐ Yes ☐ No

VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE

- (7) Is the Read Aloud Programs your first volunteer experience ☐ Yes ☐ No
- (8) If it is not your first experience, what other experience have you had
- ☐ Washington Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped
- ☐ Seattle Public Library
- ☐ Nursing home volunteer
- ☐ Other: _____
- (9) How did you first hear about the Read Aloud Programs Project
- ☐ Events (from Seattle Public Library ☐ Local newspaper article
- ☐ The Weekly Magazine ☐ Radio or TV announcement
- ☐ Flyer at the library ☐ Other: _____
- ☐ I do not remember

READ ALOUD PROGRAMS FOR THE ELDERLY VOLUNTEER SURVEY

As part of our research for the project, we need to ask a few questions about your background, why you joined the project, etc. Another Form?! Yes, I know. Sorry. And thanks for filling it out.

Judy Evans
Project Coordinator

BACKGROUND

- (1) Age Please check one
- | | |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| ☐ Under 25 | ☐ 45-54 |
| ☐ 25-34 | ☐ 55-64 |
| ☐ 35-44 | ☐ 65 or over |
- (2) Sex ☐ Male ☐ Female
- (3) Education completed
- | | |
|--|--|
| ☐ Some high school study | ☐ Bachelor's degree...what area? _____ |
| ☐ High School or GED degree | ☐ Some graduate study |
| ☐ Some college study | ☐ Post-undergraduate degree...what? _____ |
- (4) Children
- Are you a parent ☐ Yes ☐ No
- If you are a parent, do your children still live with you ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Part of the
- (5) Are you now, or have you in the past cared for an elderly relative or friend in your own home ☐ Yes ☐ No
- (6) Do you now, or have you in the past had a relative or friend that had to live in a nursing home ☐ Yes ☐ No

VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE

- (7) Is the Read Aloud Programs your first volunteer experience ☐ Yes ☐ No
- (8) If it is not your first experience, what other experience have you had
- | |
|--|
| ☐ Washington Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped |
| ☐ Seattle Public Library |
| ☐ Nursing home volunteer |
| ☐ Other: _____ |
- (9) How did you first hear about the Read Aloud Programs Project
- | | |
|--|---|
| ☐ Events (from Seattle Public Library | ☐ Local newspaper article |
| ☐ The Weekly Magazine | ☐ Radio or TV announcement |
| ☐ Flyer at the library | ☐ Other: _____ |
| | ☐ I do not remember |

Page 2-Volunteer Survey

(10) What first attracted you to the project (check any that apply)

- ☐ Working with the Frail elderly or Handicapped
- ☐ Read Aloud
- ☐ Leading Group Discussions
- ☐ Volunteering for the library
- ☐ Choosing stories for the program
- ☐ All the above
- ☐ Other: _____

(11) Now that you have been a volunteer, what do you like best about your volunteer experience?

- ☐ Working with the frail elderly and handicapped
- ☐ Reading Aloud
- ☐ Leading Group Discussion
- ☐ Volunteering for the library
- ☐ Choosing stories for the Program
- ☐ Other: _____
- ☐ All the above

(12) What has been the most difficult thing for you to do on the project

- ☐ Filling out forms
- ☐ Choosing stories
- ☐ Preparing stories
- ☐ Reading Aloud
- ☐ Leading Group Discussion
- ☐ Getting to the Program
- ☐ Other: _____

READING INTERESTS AND LIBRARY USE

(13) When you choose reading material for your personal pleasure, what do you prefer?
(choose as many as you like)

- ☐ Non-fiction
- ☐ Biography
- ☐ Mysteries
- ☐ Science fiction/Fantasy
- ☐ Current Fiction
- ☐ Classical Fiction
- ☐ Romances
- ☐ Magazines, Newspapers
- ☐ All the above
- ☐ Other: _____

Page 3-Volunteer Survey

(14) How often do you go to the library to choose materials for the Read Aloud Programs

- ☐ once a week
- ☐ twice a month
- ☐ once a month
- ☐ less than once a month

(15) Where do you find materials for the Read Aloud Programs (choose any that apply)

- ☐ at the library
- ☐ from the Read Aloud Project
- ☐ from home
- ☐ from a bookstore
- ☐ other: _____

(16) Is there anything that the project staff could do to help you choose and prepare programs?

- ☐ more lists of titles to choose from
- ☐ more workshops on special subjects
what areas or subjects? _____
- ☐ Other: _____

Comments:

Thank you again.



READER NEWS

APPENDIX 7

Volume 1 No. 2

THANK YOU!

As Project Coordinator, I would like to say THANKS! to all of the volunteers who are now doing such a tremendous job providing READ ALOUD PROGRAMS TO THE ELDERLY! The response from both residents and activity directors to the programs we have presented thus far has been positive and encouraging. Nancy Hoebelheinrich,

Volunteer Coordinator, and I are convinced that the Project is much needed. We are also convinced that we could not

come close to Project goals in either number or variety of programs without your support and help.

- Judy Evans

VOLUNTEERS:

We now have 17 volunteers doing 9 programs a week in 8 nursing homes. Our two inaugural volunteers, BEVERLY WALKER at Wedgwood Convalescent Center and MARY FARKAS at Branch Villa, have just passed their 3-month "mile mark" with us. We are quite pleased with their talents and continued interest. Two better volunteers could not have been found to start the program.

HELPFUL SUGGESTIONS:

Group Discussions:

Problem: Individual is too talkative and monopolizes conversation.

Possible Reasons: May have need for attention or may just like to talk.

How to Handle: At a convenient time, interrupt with a comment such as: "That is an interesting story (or comment). Can anyone else remember a similar incident?" or "That's very good, Nancy. Now I'd like to hear what Judy has to say." Then ask Nancy another question. Also, if you are sitting near the talkative one, what works well is touching her on the arm and saying, "Thank you, Nancy. I want to hear from someone else now." Or, "I'm going to read aloud now."

If you have any tips for improved programs or questions about techniques that we might suggest, please let us know. Good suggestions should be aired and shared. THANKS!

WHAT'S NEW TO READ?

POETRY has become a big favorite in all nursing homes. Recent readings include:

"Paul Revere's Ride" by H.W. Longfellow
 "The Village Blacksmith" by H.W. Longfellow
 "Birches" by Robert Frost
 "The Cremation of Sam McGee" by Robert Service
 "If" by Rudyard Kipling
 "Father William" by Lewis Carroll
 "The Highwayman" by Alfred Noyes

ANIMAL STORIES continue to be a favorite:

Rascal by Sterling North
The Incredible Journey by Sheila Burnford
 "Tricky Woo" and "Only One Woot" from **Jarvis**
Herriot's Dog Stories

OTHER APPLAUSE GETTERS:

Lake Wobegon Days by Garrison Keillor
Mama's Bank Account by Kathryn Forbes
 "After 20 Years" by O. Henry in **Ellery Queen's Murder Mysteries**
The Virginian by Owen Wister
 Selections from **Foxfire I and II**

We will gladly help you find any of these stories, poems, or books that you need for a program. Give us a call!

NEW BOOKSHELF

The project staff has begun purchasing books available on long term loan to our volunteers. Below is a list of our latest paperbacks. Please give us any suggestions you have for new purchases.

Alice's Adventures in Wonderland and Through the Looking-Glass by Lewis Carroll
All Creatures Great and Small by James Herriot
All Things Bright and Beautiful by James Herriot
James Herriot's Yorkshire by James Herriot
Lord God Made Them All by James Herriot
Riding for the Brand by Louis L'Amour
Call of the Wild by Jack London
Adventures of Tom Sawyer and Adventures of Huckleberry Finn by Mark Twain
Complete Short Stories of Mark Twain by Mark Twain

VOLUNTEER OBSERVATIONS:

Of her first program at PARKSIDE, MARY CARBRAY said, "I hope we can make their Mondays a little brighter for them (the residents). I look forward to getting to know them better."



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Seattle Public Library

MOBILE SERVICES • 425 Harvard Ave. E. • Seattle, WA 98102 • 684-4713

MARILEE BIRCHFIELD at WEDGWOOD reminds us, "Nearly everyone enjoys talking about their heritage and families."

Said MERRILL BECKER of TERRACE VIEW, "The residents' body language indicated high enjoyment of the guitar playing and singing."

AUDREY GUSTAFSON commented of volunteers that "if people come in with egos and expect to perform, they come for the wrong reason!" AUDREY volunteers at BRANCH VILLA.

REMINDERS:

PLEASE have one member of your volunteer team call us each week if you don't hear from us. You are often hard to reach by telephone and attempts by both our office and your team increase the chances of needed communication.

Please don't forget to complete your Program and Materials Evaluations after each program. These are very important to us. We are in the process of simplifying the forms to make them a little easier to complete. We still need to receive them in their present form every few weeks. We also need your Volunteer Time Record for each month as well.

ACTIVITY DIRECTORS:

We plan to have at least one program a week in the nine nursing homes selected for the Project by September. If you have any questions, comments, requests or concerns, please contact us.

THE ESCA READ-ALLOUD PROGRAMS FOR THE ELDERLY is part of Mobile Services, Seattle Public Library. We are the BOOKMOBILE people and we visit your nursing home at least once a month to provide residents with library materials. We offer large print, regular print and paperback books on a variety of subjects. We may not always have exactly what the residents may want on the truck during a given visit. We can, however, take requests for an author, title or subject either when the truck is there, or by telephone. If you call us at least a week before our next visit, we should be able to provide residents with the books they want.

Please make new residents aware of the BOOKMOBILE services and remind the present residents.

EVALUATION FORMS FOR ACTIVITY DIRECTORS:

We are preparing an EVALUATION form that we would like our Activity Directors to use in assessing the effectiveness of our programs and the selections read during them. These evaluation forms will be an important addition to the total feedback we receive about our programs. You are in a unique position for you not only know the residents individually, but you are also able to watch the programs objectively. We need your observations! We'll let you know when we are ready to send them out.

BOOKMARKERS:

Watch out for our BOOKMARKERS that are being made to remind residents of Bookmobile services. They are being made in large print and will be free to all residents.

IN OUR NEXT ISSUE:

In our next issue of READER NEWS we hope to include news about the project, information about upcoming workshops, and your comments and suggestions!



Seattle Public Library

MOBILE SERVICES
15 Harvard Ave. E.
Seattle, WA 98102

READ ALOUD PROJECT
Volunteer Performance Evaluation Form

Name: _____

Nursing Home Assignment: _____

Rater: _____

Date: _____

Evaluation Period: From _____ To _____

Rating Scale Definitions:

- O = Outstanding: Volunteer's work in this area is excellent and greatly exceeds expected performance levels.
- G = Good: Volunteer's work in this area is satisfactory and meets expected performance levels.
- N = Needs Improvement: Volunteer's work in this area is less than satisfactory though not totally unacceptable.
- U = Unacceptable: Volunteer's work in this area is deficient and does not meet minimum performance levels.

Performance Skills:

1. Interacting with the group as leader. O G N U

Comments:

2. Conversing and communicating ideas. O G N U

Comments:

3. Developing creative and unique program presentations. O G N U

Comments:

4. Interacting with nursing home staff. O G N U

Comments:

5. Leading group discussions. O G N U

Comments:

6. Attend assigned programs. O G N U

Comments:

7. Helping other volunteers. O G N U

Comments:

8. Evaluating materials for reading aloud. O G N U

Comments:

9. Record keeping. O G N U

Comments:

10. Paying attention and listening to others. O G N U

Comments:

READ ALOUD PROJECT

Volunteer Experience - Exit Interview Survey

Name (Optional): _____

1. In your opinion, what things could be done to make the volunteer experience more satisfying? In other words, what could we have done differently?

2. What did you like about the project? (Check as many as apply)

---- First Friday meetings	---- Frequency of programs
---- Nursing home assignment	---- Freedom to develop own presentation
---- Residents in your group	---- Freedom to locate materials
---- Working with another volunteer	---- Nursing home staff
---- Time of the program	---- Audition
---- Paperwork	---- Initial training session with project staff
---- Other (specify)	

3. What is your reason for leaving the project?

Comments: -----

4. Do you want to be considered for other Seattle Public Library volunteer assignments?

---- Yes

---- No

Some Characteristics of Older Persons:

Change in the Sense of Time
Sense of the Life Cycle
Tending toward Life Review
Reparation and Resolution
Attachment to the Familiar
Conservation of Continuity
Desire to Leave a Legacy
Transmission of Power
Sense of Consummation or Fulfillment in Life

from Why Survive? Being Old in America

Robert N. Butler, pp. 409-417

ORIENTATION OUTLINE

I. Welcome

- A. Self-introduction by volunteers with brief statement explaining why they are interested in the Read Aloud Project
- B. Introduction of staff
- C. Review agenda; ask if anything else needs to be covered

II. Context

- A. Older adults
 - 1. Population
 - 2. Characteristics
 - a. See Appendix 10
 - b. Educational background
- B. Nursing homes
 - 1. History
 - 2. As institution
 - a. Skilled and intermediate care facilities
 - b. Regimentation, lack of privacy, busy staff
 - 3. Structure and services
 - a. Health
 - b. Activity directors
- C. Residents
 - 1. Population
 - a. Statistics
 - b. Effect on Read Aloud audience
 - 2. Illness
 - a. Statistics
 - b. Effect on Read Aloud audience
 - 3. Characteristics of elderly residents: implications for audience
 - a. Change in the sense of time; sense of the life cycle
 - b. Tendency toward life review
 - c. Attachment to the familiar
 - d. Transmission of power
 - 4. Isolation of residents; special needs

III. Libraries

- A. Mission
 - 1. Seattle Public Library - Mobile Services
 - 2. LSCA grant vehicle
- B. Need for project
 - 1. Nursing homes
 - 2. Relationship to goals
- C. Project goals
 - 1. Mental stimulation and enrichment
 - 2. Volunteer training
 - 3. Manual

- D. Format
 - 1. Why a format
 - 2. Aspects
 - a. Warm-up
 - b. Read aloud
 - c. Wind-down
 - d. Evaluation
- E. Freedom to Read Statement
 - 1. What it means to librarians
 - 2. What it means to volunteers
- IV. Context of programs
 - A. Audience characteristics
 - 1. Physical
 - 2. Mental
 - 3. Emotional
 - B. Choosing programs
 - 1. Guidelines - Read Aloud
 - a. Stories
 - b. Picture books
 - c. Resident requests
 - 2. Warm-up
 - C. Preparing programs
 - 1. Working with volunteer partner
 - 2. Cutting or excerpting pieces
 - 3. Practicing
 - a. Tips on reading aloud
 - b. Communication tips in manual
 - D. Presenting
 - 1. Getting to know audience
 - 2. Verbal run-through of program
 - 3. Evaluations
- V. Summary
 - A. Role(s) of volunteers
 - 1. Community need
 - 2. SPL/Mobile Services/project staff
 - 3. Nursing homes/activity directors
 - 4. Residents
 - 5. Self
 - B. Commitment
 - 1. Three months
 - 2. Communication with staff
 - 3. Needs of residents - project
 - 4. Use format
- VI. Next steps
 - A. Manual
 - B. Interview
 - C. Assignment
 - D. Programs
 - E. Additional training/meetings

VOLUNTEER TIME/PREFERENCE SCHEDULE

NAME: _____ DATE: _____

PREFERRED NURSING HOME LOCATION: (Please check two and list in order of preference,
1=first priority; 2=second priority)

Northeast: ☐ Austin Nursing Home, 9005 Roosevelt Way NE
 ☐ Wedgwood Rehabilitation Center, 9132 Ravenna Ave. NE

Northwest: ☐ Greenwood Park Care Center, 13333 Greenwood Ave. N
 ☐ Lockview Nursing Home, 4646 36th Ave. W

South: ☐ Branch Villa Convalescent Home, 2611 S. Dearborn St.
 ☐ The Greenery Rehabilitation Center, 555 16th Ave.
 ☐ Parkside Health Care, Inc., 620 19th Ave. E.
 ☐ Pederson Nursing Home, Inc., 414 10 th Ave.
 ☐ Terrace View Convalescent Center, 1701 18th Ave. S

TIME UNAVAILABLE: (Please draw a line through those hours when you are not
available)

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
8 am							
9 am							
10 am							
11 am							
12 pm							
1 pm							
2 pm							
3 pm							
4 pm							
5 pm							
6 pm							
7 pm							
8 pm							

Will this schedule change? yes___ no ___

How often does your schedule change _____

Is there anything else that we should know? _____

INFORMATION ON READER INTERVIEW

Qualifications

We are looking for volunteers who are good readers and who have skills and interests in leading group discussions. It is not necessary for you to have a professionally trained voice, but you will be able to use any voice, choral, public speaking, acting or dramatic reading training that you may have received. We want people with strong, clear and pleasant voices that can be heard by elders who often have some hearing loss. Neither are we looking for professionally trained group discussion leaders, but, if you have had experience leading group meetings or have good active listening skills and are interested in hearing what the members of your audience have to say, we want you!

Format

After an orientation to the program, we will schedule you for a one-half-hour individual interview. First, we will discuss your personal comments or concerns about the Project including any scheduling constraints. During the second part of the interview, we ask you to read to us so that we may assess your reading style and ability to lead group discussions to match you with another volunteer's reading style and skills. We may also give you pointers upon what aspects of your voice or reading style you may need to improve for our elderly audience.

The Reading

Most people have read aloud to someone: children, friends, family. Most people have also been a listener to someone who read aloud to them. A good reader allows the listener to become totally engrossed in the story. We are looking for the skills that are natural to good readers. These are listed and explained on the attached Volunteer Reader Evaluation and explanation of same.

For the second part of the Reader interview, please prepare 3 short selections of your choice: one fiction, one non-fiction and one poem. You may choose complete short selections or excerpts of longer selections. Plan the entire reading aloud portion to last about 10 minutes. The average length of time for each selection, then, should be about 3 - 3 1/2 minutes. You might take this opportunity to try your ideas for appropriate reading selections. Also, please prepare sample questions that you would use to start a group discussion based on the reading that you choose for the warm-up.

Reading Techniques

Techniques and general background for reading aloud follow this information sheet. Additional information on techniques can be checked out from the Project staff. The best practice is to read aloud before a discriminating listener or listen to yourself on tape.

Explanation of VOLUNTEER READER EVALUATION

This explanation accompanies the evaluation form used during the Reader Interview. The Reader Interview is designed to assess the skills and abilities of the volunteer reader who wishes to join the L.S.C.A. READ ALOUD Project.

Both the warm-up and the wind-down will require that a volunteer be able to make residents feel comfortable, draw them into conversation, communicate ideas for subjects to be presented in current and future sessions and organize the program into a clear, naturally flowing program. Because of this similarity, Part I of the Volunteer Evaluation combines these skills and abilities into several categories:

- (1) Ability to converse;
- (2) Ability to communicate ideas;
- (3) Appropriateness of sample questions for group discussions;
- (4) Understanding of role of facilitator to group.

Part II represents the reading aloud part of the program. Skill in these areas is necessary for effective reading aloud:

- (1) Phrasing - the recognition of proper connections of words with and without punctuation that conveys the author's meaning;
- (2) Emphasis - giving the new idea in a phrase more forceful expression than the old idea;
- (3) Timing - the effective use of pauses for dramatic effect;
- (4) Responsiveness to material - eliciting emotion proper to the author's intent with neither too little nor too much dramatization;
- (5) Pronunciation - correct formulation of sounds of words;
- (6) Enunciation - clear statement of words including the endings;
- (7) Tempo - speaking phrases at a pace that varies with the emphasis placed on phrases; also, general pace of overall reading (too slow or too fast representing Poor).

The skills/abilities found in Part III are necessary for all parts of a program:

- (1) Volume - both the loudness and force with which person speaks;
- (2) Pitch - voice frequency; i.e., where the voice is located on a spectrum of high to low (extremes of either are represented as Poor);
- (3) Eye Contact - should vary appropriately when conversing and reading aloud.

Recommendations, nursing home and non-reader assignments are made by Project staff:

- (1) Acceptance as a reader;
- (2) Second interview suggested with opportunity for further practice;
- (3) Suggestion that reader observe ongoing programs prior to assignment due to staffs' concerns about reader's understanding of project needs;
- (4) Assignment to a non-reader position within the project;
- (5) Not acceptable for this Project and subsequent referral back to the Volunteer Office of the Seattle Public Library.

VOLUNTEER READER EVALUATION

Name of Volunteer: _____

Date of Audition: _____

Name of Evaluator: _____

PART I: GROUP DISCUSSION LEADER SKILLS:

CATEGORY:	POOR	FAIR	GOOD	V. GOOD	EXCELLENT
(please circle one)					
Ability to Converse:	1	2	3	4	5
Ability to Communicate Ideas:	1	2	3	4	5
Appropriateness of Sample Questions:	1	2	3	4	5
Understanding of Facilitator Role:	1	2	3	4	5

COMMENTS: _____
_____PART II: READING ALOUD SKILLS:

CATEGORY:	POOR	FAIR	GOOD	V. GOOD	EXCELLENT
(please circle one)					
Phrasing:	1	2	3	4	5
Emphasis:	1	2	3	4	5
Timing:	1	2	3	4	5
Responsiveness to Material:	1	2	3	4	5
Pronunciation:	1	2	3	4	5
Enunciation:	1	2	3	4	5
Tempo:	1	2	3	4	5

COMMENTS: _____

- 2 -

PART III: GENERAL:

CATEGORY:	POOR	FAIR	GOOD	V. GOOD	EXCELLENT
Volume:	1	2	3	4	5
Pitch:	1	2	3	4	5
Eye Contact:	1	2	3	4	5

COMMENTS: _____

RECOMMENDATIONS: Accept Second Interview
 Should see program first Referral to SPL Other Position

MATERIALS READ: _____

RESPONSE TO INTERVIEWER QUESTIONS: _____

CONCERNS EXPRESSED BY VOLUNTEER: _____

Notes to Interviewers:

	Yes	No
1. Wants to see program first:	_____	_____
2. Discussed Program and Materials Evaluation Forms:	_____	_____
3. Discussed Volunteer Time Record:	_____	_____



Seattle Public Library

How To Find A Book

1. Use the microfilm catalog as the card catalog is now out-of-date.
2. Select either the Author, Title or Subject catalog to check for the book.
IF YOU DON'T FIND THE BOOK LISTED, PLEASE ASK FOR ASSISTANCE
3. When you find the book listed, copy the catalog number and location designator from the lower left-hand corner of the entry. Example:

Abraham, George

The green thumb book of fruit and vegetable gardening.
Prentice-Hall (1970)

634 Ab82G @ BSC BAL BRO GLK GWD MAG NET QNA UNI

└─ Downtown Subject Department (see list below)

└─ Community Libraries owning the book (see listed below)

The Downtown department location designators are listed first after the call number, followed by the Community Libraries owning the book.

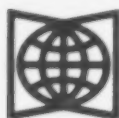
4. For older books that have no Downtown or Branch location designator, see the chart on the reverse of this sheet for locations.

DOWNTOWN DEPARTMENTS

ART - Art - 4th Floor
BSC - Business/Science - 2nd Floor
BUS - Business - 2nd Floor
EDU - Education - 2nd Floor
GRA - Gov. Research Assist.-Municipal Bldg.
HIS - History - 1st Floor
JUV - Children's - 3rd Floor
LIT - Literature - 1st Floor
MED - Media & Program Services - 3rd Floor
MUS - Music - 4th Floor
NWA - Northwest Authors - History - 1st Floor
NWC - Northwest Collection - History - 1st Floor
POP - Popular Library - 3rd Floor
SCI - Science - 2nd Floor
YAD - Young Adult - 3rd Floor

COMMUNITY LIBRARIES

BAL - BALLARD
BHL - BEACON HILL
BLD - LIBRARY FOR THE BLIND
BRO - BROADVIEW
COL - COLUMBIA
DTH - DOUGLASS-TRUTH
FRE - FREMONT
GLK - GREEN LAKE
GWD - GREENWOOD
HEN - HENRY
HIP - HIGH POINT
HOP - HOLLY PARK
LCY - LAKE CITY
MAG - MAGNOLIA
MOM - MADRONA SALLY GOLDMARK
MOB - MOBILE SERVICES
MON - MONTLAKE
NET - NORTHEAST
QNA - QUEEN ANNE
RBE - RAINIER BEACH
SHS - MADRONA SALLY GOLDMARK
SWT - SOUTHWEST
UNI - UNIVERSITY
WIL - WALLINGFORD WILMOT
WWL - WALLINGFORD WILMOT
WTS - WEST SEATTLE



Seattle Public Library

Resources by Call Number

USE THIS CHART ONLY FOR BOOKS LISTED **WITHOUT** DEPARTMENT LOCATION DESIGNATORS

R = Reference book to be used only in the library. Ask at the Subject Department Reference Desk of the appropriate department. (e.g. R917 - ask at the History Desk)

CALL NUMBER	EXCEPTION	DEPARTMENT	FLOOR
000-099	(016)	LITERATURE all departments use first 3 digits following decimal for location e.g. 016.822 - Literature Dept.	1
100-129		LITERATURE	1
130-139		EDUCATION	2
140-149		LITERATURE	1
150-159		EDUCATION	2
160-169		LITERATURE	1
170-179		EDUCATION	2
180-199		LITERATURE	1
200-299		LITERATURE	1
300-309		EDUCATION	2
	(308)	HISTORY	1
310-329		HISTORY	1
	(311)	BUSINESS & SCIENCE	2
330-339		BUSINESS & SCIENCE	2
	(335)	HISTORY	1
340-359		HISTORY	1
	(347.1, 347.2, 347.7)	BUSINESS & SCIENCE	2
360-379		EDUCATION	2
	(368)	BUSINESS & SCIENCE	2
	(369)	HISTORY	1
380-389		BUSINESS & SCIENCE	2
	(383)	ART & MUSIC	4
390-397		EDUCATION	2
	(391)	ART & MUSIC	4
398		LITERATURE	1
400-499		LITERATURE	1
500-699		BUSINESS & SCIENCE	2
	(618, 649)	EDUCATION	2
700-789		ART & MUSIC	4
790-799		EDUCATION	2
	(791-792, 793.1-793.3)	LITERATURE	1
	(793.4)	ART & MUSIC	4
	(793.8)	LITERATURE	1
800-899		LITERATURE	1
900-999		HISTORY	1
B-B.8		BIOGRAPHY/HISTORY	1
	(B.7-B.78)	ART & MUSIC	4
B(ART)		ART & MUSIC	4
J		JUVENILE/CHILDREN'S	3
R		REFERENCE/ALL DEPARTMENTS use first 3 digits for location e.g. R917 - History Department	2
RD		BUSINESS & SCIENCE	2
S		SHAKESPEARE/LITERATURE	1

TIPS ON READING ALOUD

The following is excerpted from "Tape Recording Books for the Blind", Arthur Helms, American Foundation for the Blind, 15 West 16th Street, NY, NY 11, 1962.

READING

VOICE

A reading voice must be clear, and it must be agreeable. But given clarity and agreeableness, the voice quality may vary within wide limits. No one type of voice is inherently better than another. Resonance, pitch, and other characteristics are of secondary importance. The listener is concerned with two things about the reader's voice: Is it intelligible with effort on his part? Can he listen to it for long periods of time without tiring of it?

Generally, a trained voice is to be preferred to an untrained one, but this is by no means a universal rule. A person with training in speech or dramatics will ordinarily speak more clearly and effectively than one with no such training. But if the training has been poor, or if it is improperly applied, it becomes intrusive (as for example when a reading is made a mere exercise in elocution) and can be worse than no training at all.

Thus readers who lack formal training in speech should not be discouraged by that fact alone. A person with a good voice, whose presentation is intelligent and sincere, is sometimes a better reader than one who has been poorly trained or one who never forgets that he has been trained.

DELIVERY

A good reading is natural, sympathetic, and even-flowing. To simplify this description somewhat:

A good reading is natural to the reader, without affectation, without forcing. It is reading in the manner one adopts in telling an interesting story to friends.

It is sympathetic in that the reader's interest in what he is doing is genuine and apparent.

A good reading is logical in the sense that the text is correctly interpreted. In such a reading, the author's meaning is made unmistakable by proper emphasis and phrasing. Failure to emphasize logically, or the running together of phrases that should be separated can completely change the meaning of a sentence.

Perhaps the best way to convey the idea that a reading should flow is to resort to musical terms. Reading should be legato instead of staccato. Legato means smooth and connected; staccato means disconnected, short, choppy. There are exceptions of course. Occasionally passages occur which must be read staccato. But generally speaking, reading should flow smoothly, without sharp breaks.

SPEED

Experience has shown that the majority of blind people prefer fast to slow reading. An average of 165 words per minute is usually satisfactory. Speeds will vary, however, with the type of material and the preferences of listeners.

Technical books, which usually contain difficult words and ideas that are hard to grasp, will go slower; fiction usually faster. A reader will do well to listen to one of his own recordings and make an actual check on his words per minute. This will orient him with respect to the average mentioned above.

But whatever the speed of the reading care must be taken not to run unrelated thoughts together. There must be a pause whenever the listener needs time to absorb an idea. As a very rough guide, we may say that a pause of up to two seconds should occur at the end of every complete thought. As a general rule such a pause is called for at the end of every paragraph, though not infrequently such pauses must be made within the paragraph. The reader will have to exercise his own judgment here. In regard to other pauses, such as those between chapters, and those between the opening announcement and the text, these must be of several seconds duration.

During all pauses the reader must be careful not to make a noise. This refers not only to mechanical noises (such as kicking the table) which should be guarded against at all times, it refers especially to breathing, mouth, and throat noises, such as restrained attempts to clear the throat, sniffing, and sharp inhaling and exhaling through nose or mouth. The reader who must do any of these things during a pause should turn aside from the microphone and cover his mouth with his hand. Few things are as annoying as repeated mouth and nose noises during a reading.

SOME COMMON READING FAULTS

The inexperienced reader is in an advantageous position in at least one respect: he can be prevented from forming some of the worst reading habits. Here are a few which, pointed out at the beginning, can be avoided.

Punching. This is the technique of the commercial radio announcer. It consists in emphasizing every other word as if it were the most important the announcer ever uttered. It is extremely tiring to the listener. It has no place in reading.

Dropping the voice. Some readers have a habit of dropping the voice at the end of a sentence or paragraph. The result is frequent loss of a word and the creation of a monotonous pattern in the reading. The voice should be dropped but slightly at such places. Sometimes it should not be dropped at all, and occasionally should even be raised. But it should almost never be dropped low.

The bedside manner. There are a number of well-intentioned people whose way of reading unfortunately takes a kind of patronizing so-happy-to-be-doing-this-for-you tone. Such an attitude, which the listener easily senses, is of course entirely out of place. The reader's manner, as we have said before, should be that of one telling a story to his friend.

Over-preciseness. A child who has not yet learned to read fluently has a characteristically formal, precise, conscientious style of reading in which he pronounces every word, however unimportant, with painful exactness, even going to the extent of saying "ay book" and "thee ball". A remnant of this style persists in some adults. When reading aloud they become abnormally precise, in the way one sometimes uses when talking to a foreigner who knows little of our language. Do not labor each word. Do not go out of your way to enunciate short, common words. Without being slovenly, read words as you would naturally speak them.

EFFECTIVE READING

Apart from its mechanical aspects, which we have tried to describe, effective reading depends to a very great degree on the attitude, purpose, and intelligence of the reader. If he has a genuine, and not merely a sentimental desire to render the listener a service, and if he is realistic enough to know that what the listener wants is the book first and the reader second, he will be, given a modicum of ability, a good reader.

FICTION

The reading of a story naturally calls for more color and variety than the reading, say, of a text book. But while color and variety are essential to fiction there is a tendency among readers to overdo things, particularly in the matter of dramatization. There is in fact nothing wrong with dramatizing if two conditions are met: (1) that you have the necessary talent, and (2) that you do not try to turn a novel into a play. On the whole it is better not to try too much dramatization unless you are an experienced actor. When reading dialog a reader should indicate the differences in the speeches of the various characters by a slight change of pitch or intonation or both. Suggest a dialect or brogue, when a character speaks with one, but don't go all out unless you are expert. As a matter of fact, even if you are expert, don't try to play each character as if you were giving a play all by yourself. The parts should be played if possible, but underplayed.

AUDIENCE CHARACTERISTICS AND RESPONDING TO AUDIENCE NEEDS

--- AUDIENCE CHARACTERISTICS ---

PHYSICAL:

- Hard of hearing
- Sight impaired
- Short attention span
- Occasional odd behavior:
 - Talking too much
 - Talking too little
 - Aggressiveness
 - Anger
 - Fear of being in group
 - Passivity

EMOTIONAL:

- Tendency toward life review
- Desire to leave legacy
- Transmission of power, especially loss of choice
- Attachment to the familiar
- Sense of life cycle
- Change in sense of time

----- TECHNIQUES -----

PHYSICAL:

- Face audience at eye level
- Use a low pitch
- Speak loud enough to be heard
- Use measured, clear speech
- Hold books down from face
- Read slowly with animation
- Use good speaking techniques
- Maintain eye contact
- Sit next to those who are especially hard of hearing
- Use safety precautions

EMOTIONAL:

- Be flexible and nondefensive
- Be polite; use titles of respect
- Try to remember names
- Be an attentive, active listener
- Use direct questioning techniques
- Ask for preferences as soon as possible
- Be interested in individuals, but respect privacy, especially about medical information
- Assume people are rational, but don't be surprised at irrational behavior
- Be sensitive to the needs of those who are dying
- Thank residents for attending
- Try to visit personally with each resident

MENTAL:

Some very sharp mentally
Some dulled
Varied educational levels
Varied interests with some
commonalities such as lik-
ing simple, inspirational,
interesting new ideas as
well as old, familiar ones

MENTAL:

Vary the program between new and
familiar, simple and a little
tricky
DON'T read longer than 7-10
minutes without a mental break
Vary topics to be covered, and be
prepared with options

READER ATTITUDES:

You are not performing or acting but activating imagination and
choices.
You are channeling the author's words by translating them into meaning
using appropriate reading techniques.
You are a facilitator of discussion, not a teacher.
Bring an attitude of sharing and bringing the group together, not
allowing anyone to dominate, including yourself.
BE PREPARED so that you know how long your selections will take; cut
the selections without sacrificing the story line.
PRACTICE ALOUD.

**Samples of publicity and recruitment for
the Read Aloud Project**



Seattle Public Library

Volunteer NEWS

December 1985

NEWSLETTER - A NEW LOOK

The volunteer newsletter has a new look. The purpose of this format change is to provide information in a more timely fashion rather than a scheduled basis.

Suggestions or comments? Please contact the Volunteer Office.

READ-ALOUD PROGRAM FOR ELDERLY

The Library has received a 1986 L.S.C.A. (Library Services and Construction Act) grant which will provide funding for a read-aloud program to residents in nine nursing homes.

The program will be conducted by volunteers with development and coordination by library staff.

A list of interested volunteers is being compiled. If you are interested in working with this rewarding project, please contact the Volunteer Office (625-4862).

Volunteers must have good reading-aloud ability and be willing to travel to various nursing home locations. The time commitment, including meetings and training sessions, will be three to six hours per week for a three-month minimum duration. The reading program schedule, while not determined, will probably take place during weekday afternoons.

A Reader Review Committee will evaluate prospective volunteers' reading ability. Consultants will provide training in areas such as the art of reading aloud and sensitivity to institutionalized elderly.

The half hour read-aloud programs will begin with warm-up activities, such as reading local news, discussing community events and art objects, followed by selected readings from novels, short stories and poetry.

TAX DEDUCTIONS FOR VOLUNTEERS

Remember that there are tax benefits available for volunteers under the general Internal Revenue code for charitable contribution deductions. Bus fare, automobile mileage, parking fees, and tolls may be deducted.

In January 1985, the automobile mileage deduction increased to 12¢ per mile. A record of volunteer mileage is needed to claim the deduction.

For complete information, see IRS publication #526.

VOLUNTEER DEPARTMENT STAFF CHANGE

Becky Nutt will be leaving the Volunteer Department after the first of the year to work full-time in the Personnel Department. However, she will be providing some back-up phone support when the new part-time Volunteer Department secretary is not "on duty."

DON'T FORGET!

The Volunteer Office needs to be notified as to any change in address or phone number. Also, please REPORT YOUR HOURS each month.

VOLUNTEER NEWS is published by the Library Volunteer Department. Inquiries, comments, or suggestions should be addressed to:

Kathy Bainbridge
Volunteer Program Manager
Seattle Public Library
1000 Fourth Avenue
Seattle, WA 98104



Seattle Public Library
1000 Fourth Avenue
Seattle, WA 98104

Library Information

To:

For: Release after May 23, 1986

RE: Seattle Public Library Receives LSCA Grant for Read Aloud Project

For further information contact:

Susan Fort, 386-4104

Seattle Public Library, Seattle, Washington, has received an LSCA grant through 1986 to train community volunteers to read aloud to residents of nursing homes.

The project provides for the training of volunteers in read aloud techniques, sensitivity to nursing home residents and the needs of the frail elderly, and locating and presenting reading programs on their own. It further provides for development of an instructional manual for use by other public libraries.

This program is the first of its kind in Washington State. Queries, comments and suggestions for the project may be sent to Seattle Public Library, Mobile Services, 425 Harvard Ave. E., Seattle, Wa. 98102.



Seattle Public Library

95

Community Information Officer Diane Turner 386-4100
1000 Fourth Avenue, Seattle, Washington 98104

CL-03

Read Aloud Programs for the Elderly



Seattle Public Library needs community volunteers to read aloud to small groups of residents in nursing homes.

We are searching for volunteers who have a love of reading, skill in reading aloud and a desire to share those interests and skills with elders who can often no longer read on their own. Volunteers visit nursing homes on a regular basis and present one hour long programs once or twice a week. We ask for a three month commitment. We will train volunteers to assist in this project.

Interested? Call:

Seattle Public Library
Volunteer Program Manager
386-4140



Seattle Public Library

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READER NEWS



A NOTE FROM THE PROJECT COORDINATOR

Thank you for your interest in the Read Aloud Programs for the Elderly Project. Nancy Hoebelheinrich, the Volunteer Coordinator, and I have been pleased by the way the project has gone thus far. We would like to share some basic information about the project in our READER NEWS No. 1. Please feel free to contact us if you have questions or comments about the project, or wish to share your experiences in providing

library programs and services to the frail elderly.
Judy Evans, Project Coordinator.

THE READ ALOUD PROGRAMS FOR THE ELDERLY

The Seattle Public Library's Read Aloud Program is off and running. A 1986 Library Services and Construction Act grant has provided funding for a one year grant to train community volunteers to read aloud to residents at Austin Nursing Home, Branch Villa Convalescent Center, Greenwood Park Center, Lockview Nursing Home, Parkside Health Care, Pederson Nursing Home, The Greenery (formerly Squire Park) Terrace View Convalescent Center and Wedgwood Convalescent Center.

Although reading aloud to the elderly by volunteers is a familiar library service, the concept of intensive training of volunteers in the art of reading aloud in a group setting is one of the unique features of this project.

The project, which will run through January 1987, provides for the training of volunteers in read aloud techniques, sensitivity to nursing home residents and the needs of the frail elderly. It is hoped that with training and guidance, volunteers will gain the skills needed to develop reading programs on their own. A byproduct of this project is the development of an instructional manual for use by library staff, volunteer coordinators, and activity directors interested in conducting read aloud programs at their respective facilities.

The project is designed to offer mental stimulation to nursing home residents and thereby enrich the quality of their lives. To achieve this goal, the hour long programs are designed for a group of approximately 10 residents. The programs involve three sections: a) warm up, b) reading and c) wind-down. The 10-15 minute warm-up can be as simple as reading from current events, or as complex as discussing the history of a custom. The warm-up is followed by 20-25 minutes of reading aloud from such media as short stories, poetry, chapter excerpts. The 10-15 minute wind down typically features an evaluation of how residents

Vol.1 No.1

enjoyed the material read to them and an opportunity for residents to suggest materials to read at a later date. Generally the readings chosen are light, simple, and easy to read with clear dialogue.

The Read-Aloud Project began the first of May. Staff members hope to be running at least one program a week in all nine nursing homes -- with an ultimate goal of completing 370 programs.

The Read Aloud Project has two staff positions-- Judy Evans, Project Coordinator, and Nancy Hoebelheinrich, Volunteer Coordinator, who are eager to report on the project's success. "We feel the program becomes more successful the longer we do it," said Ms. Evans. "The longer the project is in operation the more willing the residents become in revealing what they are interested in and in opening up to the group."

Volunteer participants make a three-month commitment to the project, working approximately five hours a week. All of our volunteers share four primary characteristics. 1) a love of reading, 2) a skill in reading aloud, 3) a desire to share those interests and skills with elders who can often no longer read on their own 4) "We also look for people who enjoy leading group discussions," said Ms. Evans. Each volunteer works as a part of a team of two at an assigned nursing home. As partners, volunteers aid each other in group interaction, support each other in finding material and learn from each other.

Although the Read Aloud Project is funded only until January, 1987, additional funding to continue coordination of the project is being sought. The intent of the project is to have the volunteer component be self-sustaining by the end of the project. To facilitate this goal, project staff are developing an instructional manual to share with others in one or more workshops geared toward interested public service librarians and the general public. The manual will provide information and how-to-do-it techniques of "reading aloud", as well as contain an annotated bibliography of suggested reading aloud materials.

MORE TO COME

We are in the process of planning a series of workshops and informational packets about the project. Please contact us if you wish to be put on a mailing list. We look forward to meeting you in the future.

PROJECT LOCATION

The Read Aloud Project is administered by and located in Mobile Services (the Bookmobile Department) 425 Harvard Ave. E. Seattle, WA 98102. (206) 625-4913 Gloria Leonard is the Managing Librarian.